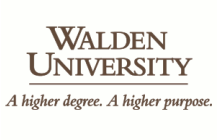

2018

Online and Hybrid Graduate Student and Advisor Preferences

Melody Mayo
Walden University

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College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Melody Mayo

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Online and Hybrid Graduate Student and Advisor Preferences

by

Melody Mayo

MEd, Southern Arkansas University, 2007

BBA, Southern Arkansas University, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2018

Abstract

The focus of this study was the advising style preference of graduate-level students and advisors in online and hybrid programs at a university in rural Arkansas. The purpose of this study was to determine how graduate level advisors can better serve students and to use the results as a tool for advisor training. The key research questions for the study were the preferred advising style of graduate-level students in online and hybrid programs and the advising style preferred by graduate-level advisors. A mixed method with an explanatory sequential design was used, and the Academic Advising Inventory was administered to the population of graduate students and their advisors using a web-based survey. Data were collected from students (n = 224) and advisors (n = 9). Responses were analyzed by following the Academic Advising Inventory Manual and using SPSS for calculations. The responses were recoded to separate the prescriptive and developmental responses. Next, the items were calculated to determine if each respondent was advised prescriptively or developmentally. Finally, the advising satisfaction level for students was calculated to determine student satisfaction with each form of advising received. The results indicate that graduate-level students in both online and hybrid programs prefer developmental advising over prescriptive advising. Students enrolled in hybrid programs indicated greater satisfaction with the advising they received than students enrolled in online programs. Overall students who received developmental advising reported higher satisfaction rates than those who received prescriptive advising. Results of this study will serve as the basis for graduate advisor training and the creation of a training manual.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Academic advising is an important aspect of any college student's tenure in higher education. Academic advising practices have been documented since the founding of Harvard College in 1636 (Daly & Sidell, 2013). Since then, three major academic advising styles, developmental, prescriptive, and intrusive, have formed. The primary goals of advising are to guide students in academic endeavors by assisting in course scheduling, and informing students of campus policies and procedures (Appleby, 2008; Kuhn, 2008). Each form of advising has unique characteristics that cause students to prefer one form over the others.

Quality academic advising is critical to student success in higher education. A student's solid relationship with their advisor gives them someone on campus who cares about their success (Drake, 2011). Good Positive advising relationships which start early in a student's academic career can aid in the success and completion of a degree. A graduate student's connection with their faculty advisor has the greatest influence on student persistence (Twale, 2015). The weight advising has on student success is what made the study necessary to the local institution.

In addition, the results of research conducted on students at the undergraduate level have demonstrated the importance of quality advisor contact on student success (Young-Jones, Burt, Dixon, & Hawthorne, 2011). My project is unique because in it, I addressed two under-researched areas of higher education, advising and graduate students (Curry, 2013). My purpose in this study was to determine the advising style preference of graduate students and advisors in both online and hybrid programs.

Consequently, research has not been conducted locally to determine what students want and need from an advisor at the study institution. According to the graduate dean, faculty members who advise have not received training or guidance on how to provide quality advising to students. The dean also stated that advising practices had remained the same for the last 10 years even though program offerings, methods of delivery, and the student demographics have changed.

Chapter 1 includes the background information on academic advising as it relates to the study. I also address the problem according to research and at the local level. I state the purpose of my study and I detail along with the nature of the study and relevant definitions. I include possible limitations of the study the significance of the research results.

Background

Prescriptive advising is the traditional form of advising where the advisor and the student view the advisor as the authority in the relationship, and the advisor provides guidance while the student listens and follows instructions as stated. Prescriptive advising is used when the primary purpose of meeting with an advisor is for course scheduling, policy information, and degree completion information. The advisor is consulted as the expert for information without much interaction or conversation (He & Hutson, 2016). Prescriptive advising allows students to take responsibility for their academic career and reach out to their advisor when issues arise.

In contrast, developmental advising provides both the advisor and the advisee with the opportunity to take an active role in the advising process. The term ". . .

developmental advising has been a broad term often used to merely describe good advising practices" (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 12). The advisor and student effectively communicate to ensure the student's needs are met. Both the advisor and the student work together to develop course plans and share the responsibility of ensuring the student's success (Crookston, 1972). During advising sessions, the student's strengths and weaknesses are discussed, and campus services are reviewed to ensure the student is aware of the options available.

In addition, developmental advising focuses on the student's future in addition to their academic career. The advisor teaches the student about course planning, campus policies, and planning for the future (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Advisors show students how current coursework and planning relates to their future career. The student uses the opportunity to learn and develop academic skills, career goals, and personal communication which can be used later in the workforce (McGill, 2016). Students with developmental advisors learn how to take an active role in their personal success. Winston and Sandor (1984b) found that students prefer developmental advising over prescriptive advising.

Furthermore, in an intrusive advising relationship, the advisor takes a proactive role in contacting the student by reaching out early in the semester or before enrollment (Cannon, 2013). The advisor builds the relationship with the student by asking questions and actively listening to the student's responses. Active listening will help to ensure course planning aligns with the student's needs and necessary campus resources are suggested. The primary goal is to ensure the advisor searches out the student and

determines needs rather than passively waiting for the student to contact the advisor. Finally, advisors ensure the relationship is regularly maintained throughout the student's college career to graduation (Cannon, 2013). The responsibility for the student's success is placed on the advisor rather than the student.

Quality academic advising is critical to student success in higher education. A student's solid relationship with their advisor gives them someone on campus who cares about their success (Drake, 2011). Positive advising relationships, which start early in a student's academic career, can aid in the success and completion of a degree. A graduate student's connection with their faculty advisor has the greatest influence on student persistence (Twale, 2015). The weight advising has on student success is what made the study important to the local institution.

In addition, the results of research conducted on students at the undergraduate level have demonstrated the importance of quality advisor contact on student success (Young-Jones et al., 2011). My project is unique because in it, I addressed two under-researched areas of higher education: advising and graduate students (Curry, 2013). My purpose in this study was to determine the advising style preference of graduate students and advisors in both online and hybrid programs. The institution is a traditional brick-and-mortar university and advisors are accustomed to working with students face to face and only during scheduled registration advising sessions. Advisors at the institution have not traditionally initiated contact with students but rather waited for students to schedule advising appointments during the set registration time. Historically, students were required to meet face to face with an advisor for course registration. Due to the increase

in online enrollment, graduate students are given the option to register themselves online through their portal or contact their assigned advisor for guidance. If the students do not reach out to their assigned faculty advisor, often there is no contact.

The study institution is a public 4-year school located in Arkansas. The school was established in 1909 by the legislature and began offering courses in 1911. The institution is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and practices the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) method of accreditation. AQIP means the institution strives for continuous quality improvement. Because the institution is an AQIP school, all processes and services are continually reviewed to determine whether room for improvement exists.

The institution studied has an interactive fact book, which more informed me about to the demographics of the school; however, to maintain the anonymity of the school, specific attribution data is withheld. The institutional faculty member and staff member demographics were provided by the university's institutional researcher and are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Fall 2015 Full-Time Faculty Demographics

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
African-American	5	4	9
Asian	12	1	13
Nonresident alien	1	0	1
Spanish surname	2	0	2
White	68	66	134
Total	88	73	161

Note. Adapted from C. Pacheco, personal communication, October 22, 2015.

Table 2 shows support staff demographics. The majority of support staff members are white. There are more female than male support staff members. It is interesting to note the number of support staff compared to the number of faculty members.

Table 2

Support Staff Demographics

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
African-American	12	25	37
Asian	12	1	13
Nonresident alien	3	3	6
Spanish surname	3	0	3
White	135	169	304
Total	165	198	363

Note. Adapted from C. Pacheco, personal communication, October 22, 2015.

Academic offerings at the study institution include 4-year undergraduate baccalaureate degrees, with more than 60 majors in four colleges, and six associate degrees. Graduate programs are currently offered in each of the four colleges with a total of 13 master's degrees, seven licensure programs, and eight certificate programs. According to the University historian, the first graduate level courses were offered in 1975 in the business and education departments. Enrollment in graduate degree programs at the study institution has increased from a slightly more than 400 students in 2010 to more than 1,000 students in Fall 2015 as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Fall 2015 Student Demographics

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
African-American	34	67	101
Asian	2	3	5
Multiracial	2	1	3
Natural American Indian	2	4	6
Nonresident alien	467	87	554
Spanish surname	0	1	7
Unknown	7	6	13
White	84	163	247
Total	598	332	930

Note. Adapted from C. Pacheco, personal communication, October 22, 2015.

Graduate student enrollment increased 99.8% between Fall 2014 and Fall 2015. Online enrollment increased by 41% from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015 (K. Cole, director of online learning, personal communication, October 22, 2015). The drastic increase in online students is part of what is driving this study. The director also shared the results of the *Adult Student Priorities Report* conducted by Ruffalo Noel-Levitz at the study institution during spring 2016 (Ruffalo Noel-Levitz, 2015). All students enrolled in online courses had the opportunity to participate in the study. Results of the survey questions related to academic advising are outlined in Table 4 for reference.

Table 4

Graduate Student Satisfaction With Academic Advising Spring 2016

Survey Item	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap
My advisor is knowledgeable about major requirements.	91	74	17
Upon enrollment, a degree completion plan is made.	88	69	19
My advisor is accessible by phone and email.	88	75	13
My advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.	86	64	22
My advisor helps me apply my major to career goals.	84	55	29
My advisor is available at times convenient for me.	81	65	16

Note. All reported items are percentage.

The study is needed to help the graduate dean develop a training plan for graduate level advisors. In addition, advisors can use the information to understand what graduate students want and need from an advisor. Positive advising is a key element to student success in higher education.

Problem Statement

The local problem stems from the fact that graduate level academic advising is not considered important by administrators at the study institution (K. Bloss, graduate dean, personal communication, March 29, 2017). Full-time staff advisors were hired to improve undergraduate advising and retention within each of the colleges. The advisors were told they were to focus only on undergraduate students. The graduate dean would like to ensure graduate faculty advisors provide the service needed to ensure students become successful. A task force is in place to look at academic advising at the undergraduate level which is not in place at the graduate level. Graduate advising consists of faculty members advising students on which courses to take each semester if students opt to consult an advisor. Students have the option to register themselves online.

The current advising practice does not provide opportunities for students and faculty members to build a relationship because most students choose to register themselves. Students who do not come to campus and visit faculty members during office hours do not have a person on campus to contact when issues arise. Lack of support is particularly a problem at the graduate level because the programs are online and students have full-time jobs which prevent them from coming to campus during normal office hours.

Graduate faculty members advise students on which courses to take each semester, which is the extent of advising at the graduate level. The current advising practice at the graduate level does not provide opportunities for students and faculty members to build a relationship. Students who do not come to campus and visit faculty members during office hours do not have a person on campus to contact when issues arise. Graduate level programs are online, so the lack of faculty member availability hinders the options for students to find assistance.

Moreover, graduate advisors do not receive training on the components of quality academic advising. Deans and department chairs do not promote advising as an important faculty member responsibility. According to the graduate dean, tenure and promotion guidelines do not include advising or student service as a requirement for faculty members. These factors demonstrate the lack of emphasis on academic advising at the study institution (K. Bloss, personal communication, March 29, 2017). The graduate dean embraces the AQIP model of continuous improvement and is looking for

ways to improve graduate advising, and this study provided data needed to promote change (K. Bloss, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

Because the institution is an AQIP school and practices continuous quality improvement, the graduate dean requested that I conduct a study to determine the advising style preference of the local graduate students and advisors. The dean will use the results of this study to train graduate faculty advisors based on the style preferred by most graduate students while incorporating the advisor preference (K. Bloss, personal communication, March 29, 2017). The results of this study provide information on the importance of quality academic advising and the style preferred by graduate students to improve advising at the graduate level.

The problem under investigation was how graduate level advisors can better serve online students. The current advising process entails students being assigned a faculty advisor upon admission to graduate school. The acceptance letter students receive when admitted contains the contact information of their advisor, and it is recommended for students contact their advisor for course registration. Advisors receive notification when a student is admitted to their program. Some of the advisors contact students to begin building the relationship, but 10 of the 15 advisors do not make any contact (K. Bloss, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

My purpose in this study was to determine the advising style perceptions and preference of both students and advisors. I administered the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) through a web survey with a link sent via e-mail for completion. The

study was an explanatory sequential design with a quantitative focus. My intent in the study was to explore the advising style preference of graduate level students and their advisors to enhance student satisfaction with advising. Understanding graduate student preference will ensure students receive the kind of advising that is preferred to enhance student success in graduate school.

Research Questions

The information gathered through these research questions determined which advising style is preferred by students and advisors. Research on academic advising shows the importance of the relationship between advisors and advisees and indicates that advisors serve various roles when working with students such as guide, mentor, teacher, and counselor (Ambrose & Ambrose, 2013; Appleby, 2008; Crookston, 1972; Grites, 2013b). The advisor is often the only contact person for information related to university policies and procedures (Drake, 2011). Furthermore, Appleby (2008) who considers advising a form of teaching, created an advising syllabus for advisors to use as a guide when working with students. The importance of advising on student success prompted the research questions for this study.

RQ1: What is the preferred advising style of graduate students in online programs?

RQ2: What is the preferred advising style of graduate advisors who direct online programs?

RQ3: What is the preferred advising style of students in hybrid programs?

RQ4: What is the preferred advising style of graduate advisors who direct hybrid programs?

Theoretical Foundation (Quantitative)

The theoretical foundation for this study is Crookston's (1972) developmental advising style. The concept of developmental advising was first discussed in 1972, and again in 1982 to revise the form of advising. Developmental advising became a popular form of advising in 1984 (Grites, 2013a; Grites, 2013b; Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Developmental advising provides both the advisor and the advisee with the opportunity to take an active role in the advising process by developing course plans and sharing the responsibility of ensuring the student's success. Both parties work together for the maximization of the student's educational endeavor.

Developmental advising aligns with principles of developmental counseling because the student uses the opportunity to learn and develop personal communication, behavioral, and decision-making skills (Crookston, 1972). The advisor teaches the student about course planning, campus policies, and planning for the future rather than utilizing the authority method (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Advisors use skills to determine the student's abilities and form a collaborative relationship with the advisee (Grites, 2013b). My purpose in this study was to determine the advising style preference of online and hybrid graduate students and advisors. Therefore, the developmental theory aligns with this study because developmental advising is one of the key forms of academic advising.

Nature of the Study

The design for this study was a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design with a quantitative focus. In this design, the researcher collects and analyzes the quantitative data and then collects secondary, qualitative data to build on the findings of the first phase (Clark & Ivankova, 2015; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). I considered several other research designs for my project including exploratory, transformative, and multiphase. I wanted a design that would have quantitative data to provide a broad answer to the research questions and qualitative data to clarify the information (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2016; Ivankova et al., 2006). After reviewing the designs, I determined that an explanatory sequential study would be the best method for the research study

In this explanatory sequential study, I collected data in the form of a survey, and provided feedback options at the end of each section for the respondents to provide clarification into their answer choice. When conducting mixed-method studies, priority must be given to the quantitative or qualitative portion of the study. In explanatory sequential designs, priority is normally given to the quantitative portion (Clark & Ivankova, 2015; DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2016; Ivankova et al., 2006). I gave priority to the quantitative phase because it was conducted first and provided general answers to the research questions.

The survey included demographic questions and advising questions from the AAI developed by Winston and Sandor (1984a) (see Appendix E). The AAI is a seminal tool available to members of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) on the

website for researchers and students. Written permission to use the AAI for research or dissertations is not required, the NACADA does request a notification when using the AAI is planned. I notified the NACADA of my intent to use the AAI and received feedback of approval.

I chose the AAI because of its reputation in the advising community, and the recommendation from Conoley and Kramer (1989) was as follows: "This inventory represents an excellent first step in providing institutions with a short and relatively reliable assessment tool" (p. 8). My purpose in this study was to provide an initial evaluation of academic advising for improvement. The primary purpose of the AAI is the evaluation of academic advising programs for improvement. The AAI can also be used to compare advising practices within universities and across departments (Conoley & Kramer, 1989). These factors are what made the AAI the perfect choice for this study.

The AAI consists of four parts that are as follows:

> . . . designed to measure three aspects of academic advising: (a) the nature of advising relationships, seen along a developmental-prescriptive continuum (Part 1), (b) the frequency of activities taking place during advising sessions (Part II), and (c) satisfaction with advising (Part III). Part IV of the *Inventory* was designed to gather demographic-type information about the student and his or her advising situation. (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 10)

I modified Part IV to gather information about graduate level students because the original version contained questions common to undergraduate level students. The

student age ranges and degree program options were changed to align with the students and advisors who were responding to the survey. Otherwise, I used the AAI as written.

The AAI was developed based on Crookston's (1972) description of developmental and prescriptive advising approaches. The scale as it is today went through pilot testing and alterations including factor analysis (Conoley & Kramer, 1989). A panel of eight experts in the academic advising field originally constructed the AAI. They were asked to identify items as prescriptive or developmental based on the definitions by Crookston (1972). Items that did not align with either advising style were discarded. During the second phase, the remaining pairs of statements were given to a group of traditional age undergraduate students from across the nation. The final instrument consists of 14 items defining the developmental-prescriptive advising scale (DPA) with three measurement factors: Personalizing education (PE), academic decision making (ADM), and selecting classes (SC) (Winston & Sandor, 2002).

The AAI is a theoretically grounded tool that has been in use for more than 30 years and according to Google Scholar, has been cited by 37 researchers to assess academic advising and student advising style preference. Winston and Sandor (2002) included reliability and validity information in *Evaluating Academic Advising: Manual for the Academic Advising Inventory.* I used the manual and followed the guidelines set by the NACADA for administering the AAI.

I used the Cronbach alpha procedure to estimate reliability and internal consistency of the DPA and the three subscales. The DPA and its subscales were found to be "relatively homogeneous and stable enough measures for use with groups of

students" (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 15). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the DPA was .78, and the coefficients for the three subscales ranged from .42 to .81 for the SC and PE, respectively.

Before the creation of the AAI, no similar instrument existed so determining the validity was difficult (Winston & Sandor, 2002). Construct validity was established by identifying two student groups who were expected to receive different forms of advising. The researchers believed the first group received developmental advising and the second group received prescriptive advising. The first group was composed of 53 students in developmental studies who were ". . . specially-admitted, academically-marginally-prepared freshman who received intensive instruction . . ." and met with their advisor-teacher in group and private settings (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 19). The second group contained 74 regularly admitted students who received advising from part-time advisors on a quarterly basis (Winston & Sandor, 2002).

The observed advising form for the first group ($M = 80.91$, $SD = 10.46$) was closer to developmental than the second group ($M = 66.61$, $SD = 12.29$). The groups were exceptionally different on the DPA ($t = 6.57$, $df = 115$, $p < .001$), and the PE subscale ($t = 8.36$, $df = 122$, $p < .001$) (Winston & Sandor, 2002). The researchers point out that these results ". . . may be taken as providing strong support for the validity of DPA and PE" (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 20). The researchers also mention the importance of noting ". . . that on all measures both groups reported that their advising fell on the 'developmental' end of the continuum" (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 20).

In this study, I used the AAI by asking students to complete the AAI online via SurveyMonkey. Using an online service allowed for quick data collection and helped maintain confidentiality. The online survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete and consisted of Likert-scale questions with responses ranging from 1 (very true) to 4 (slightly true) for prescriptive advising characteristics and 1 (slightly true) to 4 (very true) for developmental advising characteristics (Winston & Sandor, 2002). The Likert-scale questions provided data on the level of student-advisor interaction and how students interpret the relationship with their advisor.

SurveyMonkey provided results in a format I could analyze to find trends for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. Data collection took place at a public, four-year state university in Arkansas. The population of 1104 enrolled graduate students and their 15 advisors had the opportunity to participate in the study. I chose to conduct a census study as defined by Creswell (2012) and invite the entire population of graduate level students to respond. Demographic information was provided by the university's institutional researcher, Christine Pacheco. The student population consists of 524 female students and 580 male students as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Fall 2017 Student Demographics

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
African-American	49	94	143
Asian	5	2	7
Multiracial	2	5	7
Natural American Indian	3	5	8
Nonresident alien	420	142	562
Spanish surname	2	1	3
Unknown	9	8	17
White	90	267	357
Total	580	524	1104

Note. Adapted from C. Pacheco, personal communication, July 12, 2018.

All of the enrolled students did not participate due to issues such as not opening the e-mail, refusing to complete the survey, or inability to participate (Fowler, 2013). The study had approximately 200 student respondents who provided a broad scope of the advising practices and preferences of graduate students. I had a census sample by inviting all graduate students via an e-mail invitation to participate in the study along with a link to the web-based survey. A census sample is surveying an entire population rather than pulling a random sample of participants. Census sampling is common in schools, but the results are not generalizable due to the non-randomization of participants (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). My purpose in this study was to improve advising at the study institution and is not intended to apply to all universities.

The general e-mail invitation contained relevant information about me and the purpose of the study. Researchers have found that the length of the invitation e-mail nor adding personalization to the e-mail had an effect on the completion of the surveys

(Trespalacios & Perkins, 2016). I identified the sponsor and include a subtle plea for help, because research has shown that including these elements have a positive effect on the response rates (Fowler, 2013; Petrovcic, Petric, & Manfreda, 2016). The survey website detailed all relevant information about the study including participant confidentiality, and an informed consent agreement before students began the survey.

Survey responses are password protected, and names are not linked to survey responses. Participation in the study was voluntary. The graduate dean sent a follow-up e-mail reminder to students approximately 2 months after the initial invitation to encourage participation. The extended time was due to the Christmas holiday and semester break.

There were 1104 graduate level degree-seeking students enrolled during Fall 2017, and 252 of them responded to the survey. I did not use six survey responses from non-degree-seeking students. Also, there were 18 surveys that were not completed. Therefore, the final number of survey submissions used for the study was 234 making the response rate 21.2%. There were 15 graduate level advisors during the Fall 2017 semester. I received a complete survey from nine of the 15 advisors for a 60% response rate.

Online surveys typically have lower response rates than the paper and pencil method (Lodico et al., 2010). I chose a web-based survey because participants are located across the United States and enrolled in online graduate programs. Conducting the survey using the paper and pencil method was not feasible.

The rate of return for the survey from students was a concern. I used tips presented by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014) to encourage participation and increase the rate of return. The three elements to include in an e-mail invitation that were emphasized by Dillman et al. (2014) are the benefits of completing the survey, apparent cost to the participant, and trust between the surveyor and the participant. Also, they emphasized the importance of legitimizing the survey by having a sponsor. Including elements such as the physical address, an e-mail address, and a toll-free number to contact the sponsor for additional information will help to legitimize the survey. I stated that I am a student at Walden University and included the address, e-mail address, and phone number to Walden University's institutional review board.

Students and advisors completed the survey online via SurveyMonkey. Using an online service allowed for quick data collection and helped maintain confidentiality. My Dropbox and computer hard drive house the data. SurveyMonkey provided results in a format I could analyze to find trends for the quantitative and qualitative data collection.

My role at the institution did not hinder data collection because I do not have authority over the participants. I am a full-time staff member in the graduate admissions office. Participants included students who are currently enrolled, so their admission status was effected based on participation. When students received information about the study, I established my role as a student at Walden and stated that I am an employee of the institution. Before the study, I had little or no contact with the participants. Students were made aware that the survey responses are anonymous.

Analysis of the survey data took place after the surveys were completed. The Likert-scale items on the survey were downloaded from SurveyMonkey to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for analysis. The AAI creators developed a coding system for analyzing the results. The coding information for Parts I, II, and III of the instrument is included in the AAI user's manual (Winston & Sandor, 2002). Reviewing data patterns, including means and standard deviation took place after coding. Results of the AAI show developmental advising is dominant. According to Winston and Sandor (2002), "Low scores (14 to 56) indicate that prescriptive advising is prevalent . . . High scores (57 to 112) indicate developmental advising" (p. 11). After data analysis, I have a better understanding of advising at the study institution.

Sequential designs are meant to have one phase build on the other, therefore, the quantitative data provided broad information, and the qualitative data provided clarification of the survey responses. Also, the validity of the quantitative portion was validated by the qualitative data (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013; Ivankova et al., 2006). The largest portion of the survey consisted of quantitative data collection.

The use of an explanatory sequential design helps to gain an understanding of the results from the quantitative portion by conducting a follow-up qualitative portion (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006). I analyzed the responses to the quantitative portion of the study and used the qualitative portion to have a greater understanding of why the respondents prefer one form of advising over the other. I chose the mixed-method approach because using solely qualitative or quantitative methods would not provide the depth needed to investigate the problem (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz,

2016; Ivankova et al., 2006). Data collected during the qualitative phase of the study explained quantitative data collected.

The combining of methods provides a broad scope of information in the quantitative section followed by gathering specific details in the qualitative section. The quantitative section provides an overview of the level of student-advisor interaction and the effect on graduation. The qualitative portion of the study allowed me to obtain details on the level of student-advisor interaction and what students prefer. Having the opportunity to see the broad responses to the survey and asking open-ended questions to elaborate on results provides a better understanding of student-advisor interaction. Students had the opportunity to elaborate on the positives and negatives of the student-advisor relationship through the open responses.

Definitions

The following terms are defined as follows for purposes of my study:

Academic advising: Actions taken by an institutional representative to guide a student in course planning, and to inform the student of campus policies and procedures to achieve academic goals (Kuhn, 2008).

Academic advisor: A representative of an institution who takes the role of guiding a student in course planning and informing the student of campus policies and procedures (Kuhn, 2008).

Developmental advising: A comprehensive approach where a representative of an institution enhances the student's skills in decision making, and problem solving in addition to course planning (Crookston, 1972; Grites, 2013a).

Intrusive advising: The advisor is attentive to student needs by foreseeing issues and suggesting solutions before problems arise (Cannon, 2013).

Prescriptive advising: A representative of an institution tells the student which courses to take and does not provide mentoring or counseling to the student (Crookston, 1972).

Limitations

The first limitation of this study includes variables other than the advisor, which affects the interaction between the student and advisor. The second limitation is that the study was conducted at a single institution so the results will not be generalizable to all institutions. Other institutions of similar size and demographics could use the data as a guide on how to best serve students. Another option is to replicate this study at other institutions to determine the advising style preference of advisors and students for the specific institution.

Another limitation is that the results will include information from students advised by all graduate level faculty members. Each advisor provides a different level of service so the overall results will give a general idea and may not reflect all advisors. A limitation associated with explanatory sequential studies is how the weight or priority is assigned to each phase and how the results are integrated (Ivankova et al., 2006). Some broad limitations associated with the study include issues with instructors, rigor of course content, finances, family, personal health, and job demands.

In addition, a limitation for the survey portion of the study is that the return rate could be low. According to Lodico et al. (2010), ". . . populations more than 1,000

require approximately 278 for an appropriate sample" (p. 217). Because the survey was distributed by e-mail, I used strategies suggested by Dillman et al. (2014) to enhance the return rate. One of the tips recommended is to allow survey participation on a mobile device. SurveyMonkey does allow researchers to use a mobile app for surveys, so I plan to implement that option.

Significance

In this study, I addressed a local problem by focusing on graduate students and advisors in online and hybrid degree programs at the university. The project is unique because it addresses two under-researched areas of higher education: advising, and graduate students (Curry, 2013). Recommendations for further research on the advisor-advisee relationship is encouraged by multiple researchers (Anderson, Motto, & Bourdeaux, 2014; Beck & Milligan, 2014; Curry, 2013; Hughey, 2011; Jaeger, Sandmann, & Kim, 2011; Reinhart, 2010; Young-Jones et al., 2011). The results of this study provide information on advising from the perspective of local graduate students to aid the graduate dean in developing advisor training.

The survey contained questions about student/advisor interaction to determine what advising style students and advisors prefer. The open-ended follow-up questions explain the responses and provide an understanding of advisor's perspectives on advising styles. Research on advising has not been conducted previously at the study university which is why the graduate dean requested that I perform this study. In addition, this study is part of the AQIP model of accreditation and by working toward continuous quality improvement for graduate students. Cuseo (2008) stresses the importance of

implementing study results into advising practices. Correctly applying findings from this research will aid academic program directors and advisors in helping graduate students succeed in graduate school.

All graduate students at the study university were enrolled in online or hybrid programs. Master's degrees are offered in business, education, counseling, kinesiology, computer science, and agriculture. My focus in this study was online students pursuing a master's degree and their assigned advisors. All enrolled graduate students at the time of study at the institution and their advisors had an opportunity to participate in the study.

Finally, if advisors knew the needs of the local population, they could provide the services necessary to ensure success. According to the graduate dean, many of the students enrolled at the study institution are first-generation college students (K. Bloss, personal communication, March 29, 2017). Supporting career advancement through education provides opportunities for the development of a diverse group of individuals. The results of this study will aid advisors in supporting online students to ensure their goals are fulfilled, and a diverse group of graduates are prepared for the workforce.

Summary

Advising is a significant component to every student's tenure in higher education. Institutions should work to determine how to meet the needs of their specific student population best. Advising has an effect on student motivation, success in coursework and through to the end of a degree. Chapter 1 contained information about the background of the institution and reason for conducting this study. I also detailed the purpose of the study which was to determine the advising style preference of graduate level students and

their advisors. The research questions were also covered and the theoretical foundation for the study. Finally I summarized the limitations and significance of the study.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review for this study. The review of literature demonstrates past research related to academic advising. I also detail the theoretical foundation for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem under investigation was how graduate level advisors can better serve online students. The current advising process entails students being assigned a faculty advisor upon admission to graduate school. The acceptance letter students receive when admitted contains the contact information of their advisor, and it is recommended for students contact their advisor for course registration. Advisors receive notification when a student is admitted to their program. Some of the advisors contact students to begin building the relationship, but 10 of the 15 advisors did not make any contact (K. Bloss, personal communication, March 29, 2017).

My purpose in this study was to determine the advising style perceptions and preference of both students and advisors. I administered the AAI through a web survey with a link sent via e-mail for completion. Results of the study indicate that both student major and preferred advising style play a role in advising satisfaction.

Literature Search Strategy

The compilation of sources is a result of searching the Walden University Library, using Academic Search Complete database, Education Research Complete database, ERIC database, ProQuest Central database, Sage database, the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) website, and the Google Scholar search engine. Search terms that I used to find sources included *academic advising, advising, advising style, developmental advising, distance advising, doctoral advising, graduate students, intrusive advising, online advising, prescriptive advising, graduate student satisfaction,*

graduate student success, and *retention.* I found some sources by examining current research publication and using Boolean phrases.

I also found research studies using the reference lists of current articles and books. I searched for sources by academic advising scholars and then used the cited by option in Google Scholar to find current studies. Google Scholar was helpful in finding current and readministered studies when the original work exceeded the 5-year limit. Articles that exceeded the 5-year limit were reviewed only if they were considered seminal works.

Articles and research studies were initially selected if the title related to my study. After gathering many sources, I skimmed the articles and studies to ensure they did relate to my study. The selected items were checked to ensure they were from peer-reviewed sources. The sources that were not eliminated were read entirely, and I highlighted important information, made notes, and looked for checkpoints of quality. Checkpoints of quality included the framing of the research question, determining whether the article made an original contribution to the subject, clear communication, sample size, researcher bias, limitations of the study, the generalizability of the findings, and the location of the study. Articles that were older than 5 years were selected only if the content and findings of the study were considered seminal works and heavily related to my study. The authors of the articles selected were each found to be credible and their works, including the article chosen, had been cited by others.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this study is Crookston's (1972) developmental advising style. The concept of developmental advising was first discussed in 1972, and

again in 1982 to revise the form of advising. Developmental advising became a popular form of advising in 1984 (Grites, 2013a; Grites, 2013b; Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Developmental advising provides both the advisor and the advisee with the opportunity to take an active role in the advising process by developing course plans and sharing the responsibility of ensuring the student's success. Both parties work together for the maximization of the student's educational endeavor.

Developmental advising aligns with principles of developmental counseling because the student uses the opportunity to learn and develop personal communication, behavioral, and decision-making skills (Crookston, 1972). The advisor teaches the student about course planning, campus policies, and planning for the future rather than utilizing the authority method (Winston & Sandor, 1984b). Advisors use skills to determine the student's abilities and form a collaborative relationship with the advisee (Grites, 2013b). My purpose in this study is to determine the advising style preference of online and hybrid graduate students and advisors. Therefore, the developmental theory aligns with this study because developmental advising is one of the key forms of academic advising.

Some of the research conducted on online student satisfaction with advising sought to establish the link between student expectations and perceptions of academic advising services received and the level of satisfaction with the advisor (Anderson et al., 2014; Hale, Graham, & Johnson, 2009). The studies detailed prescriptive and developmental advising characteristics and sought to determine student satisfaction when either form of advising is used.

In one of the studies sought to determine student perceptions and satisfaction with the advising style received (Anderson et al., 2014). My purpose in this study was to expand on past research and to see how advisors met student expectations. The researchers found that it is important for institutions to meet the needs of students instead of utilizing the developmental approach for all students. They also found that student satisfaction with advising weighs heavily on whether student expectations were met regardless of the style used. The Anderson et al. (2014) study aligns with my study because the researchers sought to determine student expectations of advising and whether needs were being met at the study university. My study is similar and targets students at the graduate level.

Researchers in the second study on student satisfaction with advising used prescriptive and developmental advising techniques to analyze student satisfaction based on preferred advising style versus the style used by their advisor. The researchers found that 80% of students had advisors that practiced the student's preferred style of advising. Ninety-five percent of the students indicated that they preferred developmental advisors. Students were satisfied with the academic advising they received because their advisors shared the same advising style preference as the student (Hale et al., 2009). My study relates to the Hale et al. (2009) study because I determined the preferred advising style of graduate-level students and their advisors.

Student preferences in advising styles and importance of course planning vary based on gender. Gonzalez-Gomez, Guardiola, Rodriguez, and Alonso (2012) conducted a quantitative study to determine satisfaction with e-learning based on gender. The

results of their study indicate females place a greater level of importance on course planning than males, and females score higher in coursework than males. Female students are self-motivated and have increased satisfaction in designing their education. Male advisees do not share the same values, so it is important for advisors to reach out to male advisees to ensure positive outcomes and success (Gonzalez-Gomez et al., 2012). My study included a gender question to show the difference in advising style preference between males and females.

Some institutions offer developmental advising to all students regardless of student preference. Anderson et al. (2014) conducted a cross-sectional quantitative study to determine how student expectations of advisors related to their satisfaction with the advisor. Results of the study indicate institutions should promote advising to meet the specific student needs instead of utilizing developmental advising for all students (Anderson et al., 2014). Contrary to the findings of Anderson et al., Hale et al. (2009) found that students who received developmental advising reported greater satisfaction with advising and recommended that developmental advising is encouraged during faculty workshops. My study determined the advising style preference of online and hybrid graduate students and their advisors.

Graduate students who return to school after being in the workforce face challenges. It can be difficult for a working professional to revert to the role of student. The role of being a student is further complicated when someone continues in the workforce while enrolled in graduate school. Winston, Miller, Ender, and Grites (1984) detailed the importance of the advisor in helping graduate and professional school

students become successful. There are five roles and functions that advisors must adhere to for student success. These roles include reliable information source, departmental socializer, advocate, role model, and occupational socializer (Winston et al., 1984). Students and advisors need to devote time to creating a detailed program of study.

Winston et al. (1984) also detail the importance of advisor interventions throughout graduate study. There is little information available related to advising graduate students. The information provided by Winston et al. is important to my study because the study directly involves graduate students.

The topics covered in the literature review detail the broader problems facing academic advising. The themes covered include advising styles and strategies, online student satisfaction, the online student experience, services for online students, building the advising relationship, assessment, student retention and student success in online programs, and statistical information.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

The literature review is divided into six parts. I chose to group like topics together as common themes emerged during my search for information on academic advising. The first part contains information related to advising styles and strategies. The second part provides information on previous studies related to online student satisfaction with advising. The material in the third part relates to the overall online student experience and student services for online students. The fourth portion details research on building the relationship between advisors and advisees, and the importance of assessing academic advising. The fifth part contains research on student retention and

student success in online programs. The final part of the literature review provides statistical information.

Advising Styles and Strategies

Academic advising looks different on every campus, and even within departments on a single campus. It is important to determine the specific student needs based on programs, not just the institution. Advising plans must consider the campus mission, the target population, the purpose of the advising session, and the outcome of advising (Cate & Miller, 2015). I gathered data to determine student program to ensure the advising preference is captured based on programs, not just the entire graduate school.

In addition, multiple challenges are facing academic advising. Some of the challenges are changing student demographics and the need to adapt services, support and resources for advisors, and the lack of research on academic advising (Grites, Gordon, & Habley, 2008). The increasing number of international students requires advisors to understand the complexity of advising international students. Research suggests the developmental approach to advising provides the level of service needed by international students (Stebleton, 2011). The information provided by Stebleton serves as a comparison tool for the results of this study.

International advisees experience a variety of challenges when entering U.S. schools. Language and cultural issues are common with international students. It is important for advisors to be knowledgeable of the academic and cultural characteristics of their advisees (Roufs, 2015). The international information is significant to my study due to the high number of international students enrolled at the study institution.

Advising strategies include blended and intrusive advising and other unique methods to reach students. Blended advising combines the positive components of face to face advising with those of online advising (Ambrose & Ambrose, 2013). Information provided in the Ambrose and Ambrose article gave insight into advising preferences of some students. My study will enhance the information by specifically targeting graduate level students to determine their advising style preferences.

A common issue with advising is whether to use technology when advising students. Technology use in advising is appropriate when it enhances the relationship between the advisor and advisee (Leonard, 2008). The use of technology for advising is the primary method of communication for students in online graduate-level programs at the study institution. Leonard's information on technology use for advising is relevant because it shows ways advising with technology can enhance communication. Research conducted on student preferences for advising communication indicated that undergraduate students prefer e-mail communication rather than social media (Gaines, 2014). The results of my study align with the results found by Gaines. Graduate-level students also prefer e-mail communication with their advisor.

Intrusive advising is a common form of advising at the undergraduate level. The intrusive advising strategy takes place when the advisor maintains continual communication through the advisee's tenure on campus (Cannon, 2013). The goal of intrusive advising is to ensure student success and awareness of campus services. The characteristics of intrusive advising are important components of the current study to determine whether graduate students respond positively to intrusive advising.

Another advising strategy compares advising to teaching and includes the development of an advising syllabus. Appleby (2008) suggests that an advising syllabus provides a guide to the advising process, and a syllabus can aid in supporting quality advising. The creation of an advising syllabus which caters to the preferences of graduate students at the study university could be created utilizing the results of this study. Basic strategies to enhance the advising relationship include advisors genuinely caring about the student's success, maintaining open communication, recognizing signs of students struggling academically, and being proactive by answering questions before the student inquires (Hughey, 2011). The strategies that are important to enhance the advising relationship are necessary to include in the survey instrument.

Online Student Satisfaction

Some of the research conducted on online student satisfaction with advising sought to determine the link between student expectations and perceptions of academic advising services received and the level of satisfaction with the advisor (Anderson et al., 2014; Hale et al., 2009, Young-Jones et al., 2011). Results from one study indicated that advisors should meet the needs of the individual student by utilizing both prescriptive and developmental advising rather than using one form of advising for all students (Anderson, et al., 2014). Research conducted by Hale et al. (2009) found that students had greater satisfaction with developmental advisors regardless of the student's preferred form of advising. Studies which provide data on undergraduate student satisfaction with advising were a guide for comparison with students at the graduate level.

However, other research indicates that students see the advising process as an overall information session to obtain facts related to the entire campus community, not just course guidance (McGill, 2016; Teasley & Buchanan, 2013). Graduate students in online programs are often not aware of campus resources and services, the information provided to graduate students may only contain course guidance. Results of my study should detail the level of information supplied versus the level of information desired from an advisor.

Online Student Experience

Research conducted to determine issues which affect student experiences in online programs include factors such as social connectedness, perceived sense of community, and factors which influence institutional commitment. Beck and Milligan (2014) found that student experiences impact institutional commitment at a greater level than demographics or family variables. The findings of Beck and Milligan show the need to determine the local impact of how the student's experience relates to completion and success. The student experience at the local institution is a component of the study.

Consequently, results of other studies have indicated that students in online programs reported feeling isolated and not a part of the campus community socially. Furthermore, the sense of program and learning community was the same for students enrolled in online and face to face programs (Irani, Wilson, Slough, & Rieger, 2014; Reinhart, 2010). Determining how graduate students at the study institution perceive their place on campus is important. Irani et al. (2014) conducted the first research study on student experience using graduate students. The findings of the Irani et al. study serve

as a comparison tool for the results of this study because both focused on graduate students.

Comparing previous research to the results of the current study will enhance understanding of how the study institution relates to other universities. In additional to the Irani et al. study, I will also use the dissertation study conducted by Brown Jordan (2012). The research study took place in a small four-year regional university similar to the one used for the study. The purpose of the study was to determine the advising style perceptions and preference of both students and advisors. I administered the AAI through a web survey with a link sent via e-mail for completion. Results of the study indicate that both student major and preferred advising style play a role in advising satisfaction.

The importance of technology use for advising is a growing trend due to the increased number of students enrolled in entirely online programs. Multiple researchers have sought to implement tools to enhance the advising experience for online students. E-advising provides efficient, and quality advising to students at times convenient to the student (Waldner, McDaniel, & Widener, 2011). Some of the influences for E-advising quality as stated by Waldner et al. (2011) were important when composing questions for my study. For example, Waldner et al. expressed the importance of advising using online methods because students are enrolled in online programs. Findings of this study helped to determine whether students at the study university prefer electronic or face to face communication for advising.

Moreover, there are multiple forms of electronic advising. Feghali, Zbib, and Hallal (2011) implemented the online advisor that compiles student course information automatically and instantly displays the academic state of the student. The electronic method eliminates human error and provides time for the advisor to enhance the relationship and answer questions rather than spending time calculating grade point averages and length of time to degree completion.

Adding to the findings of Feghali et al., (2011), Shana and Abdullah (2014) designed and created an electronic advising system called the Student Academic Advising System (SAAS). The SAAS is an electronic program that gathers information about the student such as degree plan, course grades, and personal information to assist the advisor. The program saves time for the advisor and the student while providing an accurate snapshot of the student's academic record. Shana and Abdullah (2014) conducted a study to determine if students prefer traditional advising or e-advising. The results indicated that students preferred e-advising by 61.9% to 41.7% to the traditional forms of advising.

Students at the study university have access to an online degree audit which is similar to the programs implemented by Feghali et al. (2011) and Shana and Abdullah (2014). The online degree audit only displays completed courses and courses required for the degree. Students who utilize electronic degree audit do not have the opportunity to build a relationship with their advisor.

The continual increase in online learners requires that advisors continue to determine efficient and user-friendly methods of communicating with students. For

retention purposes, it is important to ensure quality in online advising, and that students in online programs have access to the same services provided for on-campus students (Crawley, 2012; LaPadula, 2003). Some students require deeper interaction with advisors than others so utilizing electronic methods of advising may not suit the needs of all students. The level of interaction desired for each student is important to consider when advising. The information on advising using electronic methods provided by Crawley (2012) demonstrates the need to offer training on how to utilize technology such as the electronic degree audit system at the study university.

Services for Online Students

It is important to consider how other campus offices and services affect the student experience. LaPadula's (2003) study on student satisfaction with all services provided to students is important because the advisor is not the only person students encounter while enrolled in graduate school. During the registration process, advisors are only one person on campus which students interact with to finalize their course schedule. The various student service offices (e.g., financial aid, student accounts, registrar) also play a role in the registration process.

The quality of student interaction with campus offices also plays a role in overall student satisfaction. LaPadula's (2003) findings demonstrate the importance of providing online learners with the services equal to those provided for face to face students.

In addition, it is important for student services to be accessible to online learners at times convenient for them (LaPadula, 2003). Evaluating all student service offices is

important to determine the positive and negative experiences which could affect retention and graduation rates.

Building the Advising Relationship

Academic advising goes beyond making course schedules and making sure students graduate on time. Advising also includes ensuring students receive the necessary knowledge to pursue their anticipated career. To ensure students are advised and properly prepared for their desired career, Ledwith (2014) recommended career services personnel and advisors create a partnership. Combining knowledge could enhance the student's academic career while preparing for the future after college.

Also, students entering graduate school often ask what programs are offered and what jobs are available for persons holding a master's degree. The master's degree that a student chooses to pursue is often based on the job opportunities after graduation. Creating a partnership between career services and advising could aid students in selecting a degree which is appropriate to their desired career. Including a student preference question on whether career services should play a role in advising can help determine the importance of combining knowledge for graduate level students.

The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) created a focus group on advising distance students in 2000 (Curry, 2013). The group formed the official Distance Education Advising Commission and created standards to guide distance advisors (Curry, 2013). The standards aid institutions in creating and assessing distance education advising programs. Advisors can also use the standards as a guide when serving students (Curry, 2013). The role of the advisor has historically been to provide

guidance on academic issues. The new role of mentor and developer calls for advisors to go beyond simply academic guidance to becoming engaged in the student's overall college experience. The chapter by Curry is relevant to my study because the NACADA standards serve as the basis for advisor responsibility.

The relationship between the advisor and the advisee is a collaborative experience to ensure the student's success while enrolled in the institution and to assist students in envisioning goals into the future beyond college (Baker & Griffin, 2010; White & Schulenberg, 2012). Baker and Griffin (2010) express the importance of advisors developing students by sharing information and engaging in the advising process. Advisors should acknowledge their capabilities and seek to advise students at the level appropriate to their skill level (Baker & Griffin, 2010). The advisor role should assist the student in registration and institutional policies, and aid the student in understanding how the information from all coursework is related and relevant to career goals (White & Schulenberg, 2012). The factors noted by Baker and Griffin (2010), and White and Schulenberg (2012) serve as a comparison tool for my study results.

Every interaction that an advisor has with a student is important, whether the advisor is playing the role of mentor or academic advisor. Schwartz and Holloway (2014) conducted a study to look at meaningful interactions between graduate students and faculty members. They purposefully sampled 21 students aged 23 – 64 years old who were first and second-year students from both public and private institutions to participate in their qualitative study. They communicated with participants once a week or after each interaction and asked a series of questions. The researchers used a grounded

theory approach, so the collection of data and coding took place simultaneously. Their findings indicate that advisor interaction is fundamental to the success of some students. Advisors helped students gain confidence, progress academically, develop confidence, and engage in their own learning (Schwartz & Holloway, 2014).

Students in online programs often are not aware of campus services. Advising plays a critical role in student success on all campuses because advisors know campus services and procedures (Jaeger et al., 2011). If advisors convey the information about the appropriate services needed for each student, success rates could increase. Advisors often do not go beyond the general course scheduling process because the motivation for advisors to enhance the advising relationship is non-existent (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Jaeger et al., 2011). Based on the findings of my study, incentives for quality advising might be a recommendation to administration.

Assessment

Assessment results on academic advising guide advisors in understanding their role and make sure student's educational experiences are enhanced by the advising relationship. Institutions without clear assessment practices for advising send the message that advising is not important (Cuseo, 2008). Key components of an effective advising system include clear guidelines on the importance and reason for advising, appropriate instruction on how to be an effective advisor, and recognizing successful advisors (Cuseo, 2008). An effective assessment system assesses the key components by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods (Cuseo, 2008). The assessment information detailed by Cuseo (2008) will aid in developing the advisor training.

Also, having an assessment process helps ensure students receive quality advising. When assessment processes are not in place, there is not a way to ensure program goals or advisees needs are being met (Robbins, 2013). The purpose of an assessment process is to evaluate overall advising programs and services rather than the performance of a specific academic advisor. When processes are not in place for assessing advising, starting with small assessments is a good place to start (Robbins & Zarges, 2011). This study is a start in developing an ongoing advising training followed by the assessment of advising practices.

Powers, Carlstrom, and Hughey, (2014) conducted a national study in 2012 to determine the level of academic advising assessment at NACADA member institutions. Participants, which included advisors, administrators, and those responsible for the assessment of academic advising at their respective schools, were invited to complete a web-based survey. The researchers created an instrument for the study that contained two sections, demographic and institutional characteristics, and questions related to student learning outcomes. Participants were from public, private, and non-profit schools which granted doctoral degrees, and were small and medium enrollment schools per the Carnegie classification system.

Altogether, the results from the study indicated that student surveys or questionnaires were the greatest measures used for measuring student learning outcomes related to academic advising. Formal assessment practices took place at a greater number of institutions who used only professional advisors rather than faculty advisors. Participants in this study were members of the NACADA so results may not be

generalizable to academic advising at other schools. The findings of my study serve as a basis for the development of an ongoing assessment of advising as recommended by Cuseo (2008) and Powers et al. (2014). A continual assessment system will ensure the campus services align with student preferences in advising practices.

Student Retention and Success in Online Programs

Academic advising interactions and relationships play a major role in student retention (Drake, 2011; Young-Jones et al., 2011). Academic advisors serve as teachers and mentors when guiding students through the complex institutional processes and while encouraging diligence to degree completion (Drake, 2011). A student's solid relationship with their advisor gives them someone on campus who cares about their success (Drake, 2011). The theoretical basis for the study was Crookston's (1972) prescriptive-developmental advising model. In Crookston's model, the student and the advisor work collaboratively with either person taking the initiative to ensure academic success for the student. During the first phase, two respondents completed the AAI (Winston & Sandor, 1984a). The respondents were interviewed one-on-one for a greater understanding of the answers from Phase 1 for the second phase. The results indicated that undergraduate students in online degree programs prefer quick and personalized advising sessions. The points made by Drake on the importance of advising served as a guide to instrument development for my study.

Young-Jones et al. (2011) conducted a study to review academic advising based on what students expect, need, and their level of success. The study included undergraduate students who completed online surveys. Results indicated that student

success is effected when they have a minimum of one consultation with their advisor each semester (Young-Jones et al., 2011). The authors also found that advisor expectations are contributing factors to student success.

In addition, other factors impacting student success include advisor availability, assistance, and support offered (Young-Jones et al., 2011). The findings from Young-Jones et al. (2011) were essential to my study because the researchers identified influences on student success. They found that student expectations of advisors and how well advisors met expectations contribute to the primary factors associated with student success which are student study skills and self-efficacy. Future research on advising interaction in online degree programs, the role of advising and student success, and research to measure the impact advising has on student research is encouraged (Young-Jones et al., 2011). The previous studies on student success about advising serve as a basis for comparison for the results of this study.

Statistical Information

National statistics related to adult and online learners provide information to guide advisors in meeting the needs of the unique groups. The Noel-Levitz organization provides consultation and information for institutions to improve higher education. The 2013 National Adult Learners Satisfaction-Priorities Report covered a variety of factors important to adult learners (Noel-Levitz, 2013). Information included separate scales for adults enrolled in four-year colleges and universities and community colleges.

Moreover, the report covered student satisfaction-priorities regarding strengths, challenges, satisfaction, and the likelihood of recommending the program. The report is

based on survey responses from 18,538 students enrolled in four-year institutions, both public and private. The information gathered from fall 2010 through spring 2013 indicated high importance and satisfaction with advisor's clear explanation of program requirements, advisor's knowledge of important items, and convenience of enrollment processes. The authors of the report state the importance of surveying students on individual campuses and using the results of the report as a guide (Noel-Levitz, 2013). This study will guide the specific campus on graduate student advising preferences.

The 2014-15 National Adult Student Priorities Report contains information on what adult students consider important regarding advisors and advising practices. The report shows the most significant factor (91%) for graduate students is the advisor's knowledge of major requirements. Following closely behind was degree plan development when enrolling, and advisor accessibility each at 88%. The third-ranked factor was the advisor's concern about student's success at 86%, followed by advisor's assistance in applying the major to future goals at 84% (Ruffalo Noel-Levitz, 2015). Results of the report can assist advisors in working with students to ensure a productive relationship. The questions and results serve as a comparison tool for the results of my study.

The 2014-15 National Online Learners Priorities Report covered strengths, challenges, enrollment factors, and priorities for online learners. Thirty percent of the respondents were graduate students. Respondents indicated that advisor accessibility is important (87%) when pursuing an online degree. Advisor's assistance in preparing for future goals ranked at 77% importance for online learners (Noel-Levitz, 2014). The

items considered important for online learners and adult learners varied, especially advisor's assistance in preparing for the future (Noel-Levitz, 2014; Ruffalo Noel-Levitz, 2015). The National studies serve as a basis of comparison for the results of my study.

Summary and Conclusions

Research on advising has not been conducted at the study university so results of this research will serve as a foundation for faculty advising practices and set a basis for change. Informing administrators and faculty advisors of the strengths and weaknesses of advising at the local level will aid in modifying academic policies and procedures to meet the needs of students.

Also, the development of an official advising manual and professional development sessions for graduate level advisors based on the results of this study could increase advisor ability to provide quality service and boost morale. Advisors who understand the importance of advising can better serve students by providing quality service, and students who receive quality service are more likely to complete their degree and tell others. The institution could see changes as a result of the findings from this study.

Academic advisors are an important aspect of any college student's tenure in higher education. Advisors should learn student expectations to meet the needs of current students. The increase in online programs at the study institution demonstrates that advisors must be prepared to serve the changing demographic of students adequately. The results of my study provide advisors with the information they need to serve students

better. The next section details the research design and approach of the study, followed by participant selection information, data collection and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

My purpose in this study was to determine the advising style preference of graduate-level students in online and hybrid programs and their advisors. This section includes a detailed discussion of the mixed-methods explanatory sequential design and why I selected the design over others. I describe the setting for the study and populations of students and advisors. In addition, I detail the data collection strategies, the rationale for the strategies based on research, and data collection and data analysis procedures. Finally, I outline the threats to validity and ethical procedures.

Setting

Data collection took place at a public, 4-year state university in rural southwest Arkansas. The population of 1104 graduate students enrolled in online or hybrid programs and their 15 advisors had the opportunity to participate in the quantitative portion of the study. Tables 6 and 7 detail the student and faculty member populations. Survey participants included majors from business, education, counseling, kinesiology, public administration, agriculture, and computer science.

Table 6

Fall 2015 Full-Time Faculty Demographics

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
African-American	5	4	9
Asian	12	1	13
Nonresident alien	1	0	1
Spanish surname	2	0	2
White	68	66	134
Total	88	73	161

Note. Adapted from C. Pacheco, personal communication, October 22, 2015.

The faculty demographics in Table 6 show the majority of faculty members are white and there are almost the same number or male and female faculty members. In Table 7, student demographics are shown.

Table 7

Fall 2015 Student Demographics

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
African-American	34	67	101
Asian	2	3	5
Multiracial	2	1	3
Natural American Indian	2	4	6
Nonresident alien	467	87	554
Spanish surname	0	1	7
Unknown	7	6	13
White	84	163	247
Total	598	332	930

Note. Adapted from C. Pacheco, personal communication, October 22, 2015.

In Fall 2015 the majority of students enrolled were nonresident alien males. The semester shown in Table 7 is when the university experienced an influx of students from India.

The variety of participants provided a broad scope of the advising practices and preferences of graduate students. The follow-up qualitative portion of the study allowed for a deeper inquiry into the responses from the first portion (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2016). I sent all graduate students and advisors an e-mail invitation to participate in the study along with a link to the web-based survey. The e-mail invitation contained information about me and the purpose of the study. The survey website provided all relevant information about the study including participant confidentiality, and I obtained an informed consent agreement before students and advisors could access the survey. At

the end of each section of the survey, participants had the opportunity to provide open-answer responses for the qualitative phase of the study.

Survey responses are password protected, and names are not linked to survey responses. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. The dean of the graduate school sent a follow-up e-mail reminder approximately 2 months after the initial invitation to encourage participation. Online surveys typically have lower response rates than the paper and pencil method (Lodico et al., 2010). Factors that contribute to the lower response rate include undelivered survey invitations, not knowing who the invitation is from, and potential respondents not receiving a direct benefit from the study completion (Dillman et al, 2014; Fink, 2013; Fowler, 2013; Lodico et al, 2010). Even with the potential low response rate, I chose to use SurveyMonkey to administer the survey because participants are located across the United States and enrolled in online graduate programs. Conducting the survey using the paper and pencil method was not feasible.

Faculty members encouraged students to complete the survey to boost participation. Research suggests that if people who know the person sending the survey, there is a greater chance of survey completion (Dillman et al., 2014; Fink, 2013; Fowler, 2013). Based on the research, I thought if advisors would reach out to their advisees, the response rate would increase. After advisors e-mailed their advisees, I did see an increase in student responses. A total of 153 of the 252 responses came after the advisor's sent an e-mail to their students.

Research Design and Rationale

The importance of advising on student success prompted the research questions for this study. The research questions for the study:

RQ1: What is the preferred advising style of graduate students in online programs?

RQ2: What is the preferred advising style of graduate advisors who direct online programs?

RQ3: What is the preferred advising style of students in hybrid programs?

RQ4: What is the preferred advising style of graduate advisors who direct hybrid programs?

Academic advising is an important aspect of any college student's tenure in higher education. The importance of advising in relation to student success is the concept which grounds this study. Research related to academic advising is not common, particularly at the graduate level. My project is unique because in it, I addresses two under-researched areas of higher education, advising, and graduate students (Curry, 2013). Determining graduate student and advisor perspectives on advising at the study institution will provide information on how to deliver quality service to enhance student success.

The design for this study was a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design with a quantitative focus. In this design, the researcher collects and analyzes the quantitative data and then collects secondary, qualitative data to build on the findings of the first phase (Clark & Ivankova, 2015; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Ivankova,

Creswell, & Stick, 2006). I considered several other research designs for my project including exploratory, transformative, and multiphase. I chose the explanatory sequential design because of the detailed information opportunity in the second phase. I like the idea of receiving a broad answer to the research questions and then having the opportunity to learn what is behind those responses.

I initially learned about the explanatory sequential design in my first research course at Walden. I was drawn to the explanatory sequential design and knew instantly that I wanted to use the method for my research. I wanted a design that would use quantitative data to provide a broad answer to the research questions and qualitative data to clarify the information (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2016; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). After reviewing the designs, I determined that an explanatory sequential study would be the best method for the research study

In this explanatory sequential study, I collected data in the form of a survey, and provided feedback options at the end of each section for the respondents to provide clarification into their answer choice. When conducting mixed-method studies, priority must be given to the quantitative or qualitative portion of the study. In explanatory sequential designs, priority is normally given to the quantitative portion (Clark & Ivankova, 2015; DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2016; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). I gave priority to the quantitative phase because it was conducted first and provided general answers to the research questions.

I chose to gather quantitative data first on each topic and then provide the option for further information from the respondents. The option for feedback was to enhance

the responses to the survey questions. Gathering survey responses first gave respondents areas of advising to consider. For example, Part II of the AAI asks questions about the activities that take place during an advising session. As respondents answer the questions, they may think of specific aspects of their advising sessions that stood out to them in a positive or negative way. Including the open-response questions after each section allowed respondents to express their likes and dislikes related to activities that take place during their advising sessions.

The survey included demographic questions and advising questions from the AAI developed by Winston and Sandor (1984a) (see Appendix E). The AAI is a seminal tool available to members of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) on the website for researchers and students. Written permission to use the AAI for research or dissertations is not required, the NACADA does request a notification when using the AAI is planned. I notified the NACADA of my intent to use the AAI and received feedback of approval.

The AAI was chosen because of its reputation in the advising community, and the recommendation from other researchers (Conoley & Kramer, 1989; Macaruso, 2004; Srebnik, 1988). Conoley and Kramer (1989) stated: "This inventory represents an excellent first step in providing institutions with a short and relatively reliable assessment tool" (p. 8). The recommendation from Conoley and Kramer stood out the most because this study is the initial evaluation at the study institution.

The purpose of the study was to provide an initial evaluation of academic advising for improvement. The primary purpose of the AAI is the evaluation of

academic advising programs for improvement. The AAI can also be used to compare advising practices within universities and across departments (Conoley & Kramer, 1989). These factors are what made the AAI the perfect choice for this study.

The AAI consists of four parts that were,

> . . . designed to measure three aspects of academic advising: (a) the nature of advising relationships, seen along a developmental-prescriptive continuum (Part 1), (b) the frequency of activities taking place during advising sessions (Part II), and (c) satisfaction with advising (Part III). Part IV of the *Inventory* was designed to gather demographic-type information about the student and his or her advising situation. (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 10)

The first three parts of the AAI measured exactly what I needed to know for the study. Information from the first two parts defined the form of advising advisors use, and the form of advising students perceive they receive from their advisor. The third part provided information to tell the satisfaction level of the advising students receive. The combined information provided the answers to my research questions by detailing the form of advising received and the level of satisfaction with the advising received. Part IV was modified to gather information about graduate level students because the original version contained age range brackets that were common to undergraduate level students. I modified the brackets to include student age ranges above age 60. Otherwise, I used the AAI as written.

The AAI was developed based on Crookston's (1972) description of developmental and prescriptive advising approaches. The scale as it is today went

through pilot testing and alterations including factor analysis (Conoley & Kramer, 1989). A panel of eight experts in the academic advising field originally constructed the AAI. They were asked to identify items as prescriptive or developmental based on the definitions by Crookston (1972). After the pilot testing, items that did not align with either prescriptive or developmental advising styles were discarded. The items were discarded because the study was to specifically determine prescriptive and developmental advising styles.

During the second phase of the pilot study, the remaining pairs of statements were given to a group of traditional age undergraduate students from across the nation. The final instrument consists of 14 items defining the DPA with three measurement factors: PE, ADM, and SC (Winston & Sandor, 2002). The AAI is a theoretically grounded tool that has been in use for more than 30 years and according to Google Scholar, has been cited by 37 researchers to assess academic advising and student advising style preference. Winston and Sandor (2002) included reliability and validity information in *Evaluating Academic Advising: Manual for the Academic Advising Inventory*. I used the manual and followed the guidelines set by the NACADA for administering the AAI.

After administration of the AAI, the Cronbach Alpha procedure was used to estimate the reliability and internal consistency of the DPA and the three subscales. It is important to note that the DPA and its subscales were found to be "relatively homogeneous and stable enough measures for use with groups of students" (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 15). The stable processes show the tool is good to use for measuring student preference in this study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the DPA was .78,

and the coefficients for the three subscales ranged from .42 to .81 for the SC and PE, respectively.

The need for the creation of an instrument to assess the different forms of advising was expressed by Winston et al. (1984). They also noted the promise of the AAI which was in process of being developed at the time of their publication. Hence, before the creation of the AAI, no similar instrument existed for comparison, so determining the validity was difficult (Winston & Sandor, 2002). Construct validity was established by identifying two student groups who were expected to receive different forms of advising. The researchers believed the first group received developmental advising and the second group received prescriptive advising. The first group was comprised of 53 students in developmental studies who were ". . . specially-admitted, academically-marginally-prepared freshman who received intensive instruction…" and met with their advisor-teacher in the group and private settings (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 19). The second group contained 74 regularly admitted students who received advising from part-time advisors on a quarterly basis (Winston & Sandor, 2002).

The observed advising form for the first group ($M = 80.91$, $SD = 10.46$) was closer to developmental than the second group ($M = 66.61$, $SD = 12.29$). The groups were exceptionally different on the DPA ($t = 6.57$, $df = 115$, $p < .001$), and the PE subscale ($t = 8.36$, $df = 122$, $p < .001$) (Winston & Sandor, 2002). The researchers point out that these results "…may be taken as providing strong support for the validity of DPA and PE" (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 20). The researchers also mention the importance

of noting ". . . that on all measures both groups reported that their advising fell on the 'developmental' end of the continuum" (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 20).

In this study, I used the AAI by asking students to complete the AAI online via SurveyMonkey. The original tool was completed using paper and pencil, but the paper pencil version was not feasible. The NACADA approved the administration of the AAI using an online service. Using an online service allowed for quick data collection and helped maintain confidentiality. The SurveyMonkey website allows the researcher to set parameters on what information is collected. I made sure the surveys were collected anonymously without any trace to the respondent.

SurveyMonkey provides data collection information, such as length of time to complete the survey. The student and advisor responses to the online survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey consisted of Likert-scale statements with responses ranging from 1 (very true) to 4 (slightly true) for prescriptive advising characteristics and 1 (very true) to 4 (slightly true) for developmental advising characteristics (Winston & Sandor, 2002). Students selected the level of truth for each statement. Responses to the statements provided data on the form of advising received, the level of student-advisor interaction, and how students interpret the relationship with their advisor.

Examples of statements that were ranked include: My advisor is interested in helping me learn how to find out about courses and programs for myself, and My advisor tells me what I need to know about academic courses and programs. Students who rank the first statement as very true and the second statement as slightly true indicate they are

developmentally advised. Alternately, students who rank the first statement as slightly true and the second statement as very true demonstrate they receive prescriptive advising. The entire survey can be found in Appendix E for review.

SurveyMonkey provided results in downloadable Excel spreadsheets. Using the spreadsheets, I could find trends for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. The quantitative data were all numerical and could easily be used in SPSS for data analysis. The qualitative data were organized by the respondent so I was able to sort the responses into two categories, hybrid student responses and online student responses. After sorting the responses, I reviewed and analyzed them to find common themes.

Data collection took place at a public, 4 year state university in Arkansas. The population of 1104 enrolled graduate students and their 15 advisors had the opportunity to participate in the study. I chose to conduct a census study and invite the entire population of graduate level students to respond. A census study is defined as inviting the whole target population (Creswell, 2012; Dillman et al., 2014). A census study was selected because the entire population of graduate students and their advisor are affected by advising. Advisors all serve students in a different way and student demographics vary by program. Data were needed from all programs to answer the research questions.

The student population as of Fall 2017 consisted of 524 female students, and 580 male students as shown in Table 8. It is interesting to note there were more female respondents to the study than males considering the population difference.

Table 8

Fall 2017 Student Demographics

	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
African-American	49	94	143
Asian	5	2	7
Multiracial	2	5	7
Natural American Indian	3	5	8
Nonresident alien	420	142	562
Spanish surname	2	1	3
Unknown	9	8	17
White	90	267	357
Total	580	524	1104

All of the enrolled students did not participate in the survey. Researchers have noted common issues with online surveys which include issues such as not opening the e-mail, refusing to complete the survey, being unfamiliar with the researcher, or inability to participate (Dillman et al., 2014; Fink, 2013; Fowler, 2013). To counter-act some of these issues, I included encouraging words in the e-mail invitation, enlisted help of the graduate dean and graduate advisors, and provided detailed information about myself and the purpose of the study. The follow-up e-mail sent by the dean in the spring boosted responses because the dean is well-known. When students received an e-mail from her, those who read it were able to see her plea for help and then responded to the survey.

The study had approximately 200 student respondents who provided a broad scope of the advising practices and preferences of graduate students. In addition, due to the low enrollment in some programs, if I had conducted a sample survey, the risk of receiving no responses from certain degree areas was possible. Therefore, I determined the best choice to ensure my research questions were answered and all programs had a

chance of representation, I selected a census sample. A census sample is surveying an entire population rather than pulling a random sample of participants. Census sampling is common in schools, but the results are not generalizable due to the non-randomization of participants (Lodico et al., 2010). My purpose in this study was to improve advising at the study institution and is not intended to apply to all universities.

The general e-mail invitation contained relevant information about me and the purpose of the study. Researchers have found that the length of the invitation e-mail nor adding personalization to the e-mail had an effect on the completion of the surveys (Trespalacios & Perkins, 2016). I identified the sponsor and include a subtle plea for help, because research has shown that including these elements have a positive effect on the response rates (Fowler, 2013; Petrovcic et al., 2016). The SurveyMonkey website detailed all relevant information about the study including participant confidentiality, and an informed consent agreement before students began the survey.

To ensure confidentiality, survey responses are password protected, and names are not linked to survey responses. I chose to conduct an anonymous survey to enhance the chance of participation and honestly in open-responses. Participation in the study was voluntary. Surveys sent from unknown sources often cause lower response rates due to the lack of trust from the unknown (Dillman et al., 2014; Fink, 2013; Fowler, 2014). To combat this issue, the graduate dean sent a follow-up e-mail reminder to students approximately two months after the initial invitation to encourage participation. The graduate dean is well-known to graduate students, and receiving a survey from a dean holds greater weight than from a non-administrative position.

The initial survey was administrated the week after Thanksgiving break. The timing of the survey invitation was not ideal because it was the end of the semester and the start of the holiday season. After realizing this, I waited a while to ask the dean to send a survey invitation until after the Christmas holiday and semester break. I was hoping students would have settled down from the holiday season in mid-January. Waiting until classes were back in session did help because I received 153 responses in spring compared to 99 in fall after the initial e-mail. Therefore, waiting to send the survey until after the semester began was a good idea.

There were 1104 graduate level degree seeking students enrolled during Fall 2017, 252 of them responded to the survey. There were six survey responses from non-degree seeking students which were not used. I chose not to use the non-degree seeking student responses because the research questions pertain to graduate level degree seeking students and their advisors. Students who enroll as non-degree seeking are unknown as far as what kind of course(s) they are taking, online or hybrid, and who is advising them. If they are enrolled as transient students or licensure seeking, they could have been advised by someone at another school or the state licensure department. Therefore, including their responses would have given unreliable information.

In addition, there were 59 surveys submitted with incomplete responses. Initially, I chose not to include their responses for fear it would cause inaccurate information, but after reviewing the scope of the incomplete responses, I chose to include them. The incomplete responses were sporadic throughout the survey and appeared to have been unclicked instead of skipped. It did not appear that anyone just stopped completing the

survey without finishing. Also, some of the incomplete responses had positive comments which indicates they did not stop due to being unhappy with their advising experience. As for the advisor responses, there were 15 graduate level advisors during the Fall 2017 semester. I received a complete survey from nine of the 15 advisors for a 60% response rate. I felt good about the advisor response rate.

Online surveys typically have lower response rates than the paper and pencil method (Lodico et al., 2010). I chose a web-based survey because participants are located across the United States and enrolled in online graduate programs. Conducting the survey using the paper and pencil method was not feasible. Because the survey was online, the rate of return for the survey from students was a concern. I anticipated a greater return rate than I received. I used tips presented by Dillman et al. (2014), Fink (2013), and Fowler (2014) to encourage participation and increase the rate of return. The three elements to include in an e-mail invitation that were emphasized by Dillman et al. are the benefits of completing the survey, apparent cost to the participant, and trust between the surveyor and the participant. Also, the authors emphasized the importance of legitimizing the survey by having a sponsor, and making sure the respondents know the researcher. In addition, including elements such as the physical address, an e-mail address, and a toll-free number to contact the sponsor for additional information will help to legitimize the survey. I stated that I am a student at Walden University and included the address, e-mail address, and phone number to Walden University's Institutional Review Board. I hoped these items would increase my rate of return.

Students and advisors completed the survey online via SurveyMonkey. Using an online service allowed for quick data collection and helped maintain confidentiality. My Dropbox and computer hard drive house the data. The online survey consisted of Likert-scale questions with responses ranging from 1 (very true) to 4 (slightly true*)* for prescriptive advising characteristics and 1 (very true) to 4 (slightly true) for developmental advising characteristics (Winston & Sandor, 2002). The Likert-scale responses provided data on the level of student-advisor interaction and how students interpret the relationship with their advisor. I used this information to determine the advising style students received, and the advising style advisors perceive to use during advising sessions. After determining the advising style results in Part I, I reviewed the satisfaction results in Part II to see that students are satisfied with the advising they receive.

Analysis of the survey data took place after the surveys were completed. The Likert-scale items on the survey were downloaded from SurveyMonkey to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for analysis. The AAI creators developed a coding system for analyzing the results. The coding information for Parts I, II, and III of the instrument is included in the AAI user's manual (Winston & Sandor, 2002). Reviewing data patterns, including means and standard deviation took place after coding. Results of the AAI are designed to show whether developmental or prescriptive advising is dominant. According to Winston and Sandor (2002), "Low scores (14 to 56) indicate that prescriptive advising is prevalent . . . High scores (57 to 112) indicate developmental

advising" (p. 11). After results were analyzed, I had a better understanding of advising at the study institution.

Sequential designs are meant to have one phase build on the other, therefore, the quantitative data provided broad information, and the qualitative data provided clarification of the survey responses. Students were given opportunities for an open response after each section of the survey. I was hopeful that the survey questions would prompt respondents to remember certain aspects of their advising sessions that they liked or didn't like and elaborate on those instances in the open-response. Also, the validity of the quantitative portion was validated by the qualitative data (Fetters et al., 2013; Ivankova et al., 2006). The largest portion of the study consisted of quantitative data collection.

The use of an explanatory sequential design helps to gain an understanding of the results of the quantitative portion of the study by conducting a follow-up, qualitative portion (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Ivankova et al., 2006). I used the AAI Manual as a guide for analyzing the responses and to input the quantitative data into SPSS. After using SPSS to determine the preferred advising style, I reviewed the responses to the qualitative portion to have a greater understanding of why the respondents prefer one form of advising more than the other. The open responses did enhance the understanding of the survey responses.

I chose the mixed-method approach because I thought using solely qualitative or quantitative methods would not provide the depth needed to investigate the problem (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2016; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). The combining of

methods provides a broad scope of information in the quantitative section followed by gathering specific details in the qualitative section. The quantitative section provides an overview of the level of student-advisor interaction and the effect on graduation. The qualitative portion of the study allowed me to obtain details on the level of student-advisor interaction and what students prefer. Having the opportunity to see the broad responses to the survey and asking open-ended questions to elaborate on results provides a better understanding of student-advisor interaction. Students had the opportunity to elaborate on the positives and negatives of the student-advisor relationship through the open responses. Data collected during the qualitative phase of the study explained the quantitative data collected and gave students an opportunity to brag about their advisors.

Role of the Researcher

Given my role as the recruiter/special projects coordinator in the graduate admissions office, I had to ensure my position did not hinder my role as the researcher. Before the study, I had little or no contact with the participants, and I did not hold authority over any of the participants. My experience working with students and my passion for helping then navigate the graduate admissions process is closely related to academic advising.

Because I conducted the study at a small, rural university, I thought it was important to ensure students that responses were anonymous. Often in small schools, much like small towns, everyone knows each other so students probably assume that I know their advisor and what they say could be relayed to their advisor. Therefore, students were made aware that the survey responses are anonymous, and participation

was voluntary to encourage honest feedback. The e-mails from the graduate dean and advisors confirmed my statement about responses being anonymous which could have been what increased participation due to students knowing and respecting these individuals.

Methodology

The population of 1104 graduate students enrolled in online and hybrid programs, and their 15 advisors had the opportunity to participate in the quantitative portion of the study. I chose to analyze online and hybrid students separately to determine if there was a difference in their advising style preference. Survey participants included majors from business, education, counseling, kinesiology, public administration, agriculture, and computer science. The variety of participants provided a broad scope of the advising practices and preferences of graduate students. The follow-up qualitative portion of the study allowed for a deeper inquiry into the responses from the first portion (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2016). The information received in the qualitative portion gave insight into how students view their advisors.

Population Selection

I chose to conduct a census sample and invited all graduate students and their advisors to participate. I sent all graduate students and advisors an e-mail invitation along with a link to the web-based survey. Inviting all graduate students gave everyone in each program an opportunity to participate. I did not want to exclude anyone from participation. To fully answer my research questions, I had to include all enrolled

graduate students. If I had conducted a random sample, there was a chance I would not receive responses from students in small programs.

The e-mail invitation contained information about me and the purpose of the study as suggested by Dillman et al. (2014), Fink (2013), and Fowler (2014). The survey website provided all relevant information about the study including participant confidentiality, and I obtained an informed consent agreement before students and advisors could access the survey. Survey responses are password protected, and names are not linked to survey responses to maintain confidentiality. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous to enhance the response rate. I hoped that if students knew responses were anonymous, they would be honest in responding to the survey and open response questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Graduate level students and their advisors received an e-mail invitation to participate in the study. The invitation included the purpose of the study, information about myself, and a link to the web-based survey. Those who chose to participate were connected to the SurveyMonkey website to review all relevant information about the study including participant confidentiality. Students and advisors clicked the informed consent agreement before accessing the survey. When participants finished each section of the survey, they had the opportunity to provide open-answer responses for the qualitative phase of the study.

To encourage participation, the dean of the graduate school sent a follow-up e-mail reminder approximately two months after the initial invitation to encourage

participation. In addition, faculty members encouraged students to complete the survey. Some of the faculty members offered to send e-mails and texts to students; I chose to ask the others for help after reading the information about low response rates to surveys from unknown sources (Fink, 2013; Fowler, 2014). Considering most graduate level students do not know who I am, I thought it would help people they know and are comfortable with to ask them to participate. The dean and advisors e-mails helped because I received 60% of the responses after their e-mails went to students.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis began after I downloaded the data from SurveyMonkey. Data were analyzed using SPSS software. The first step was to determine student respondent demographics. I used SPSS to calculate the number of males and females, race, and age of the respondents. The second step was to sort the student responses by program to determine which responses belong to online students and which belonged to hybrid students. Student responses which indicated non-degree seeking were removed because the study is for students enrolled in a degree-seeking program. Next, I sorted the responses based on the selected major. Based on the major I could tell if students were enrolled in online or hybrid programs. I then pulled out the responses from students in online programs and placed them into an Excel spreadsheet. After that, I pulled out responses from students in hybrid programs and placed them into a separate spreadsheet. Finally, after separating the data and deleting the non-degree student responses, I began to follow the instructions in the AAI Manual (Winston & Sandor 1984a). The student data were analyzed first, followed by advisor data. I did not separate advisor responses

by online and hybrid programs because advisors did not indicate which program they advised. Asking them to identify their program would remove the anonymity from the responses due only having one advisor per program.

According to the AAI Manual, Part I has developmental and prescriptive characteristics placed randomly, so the first step was to recode the items based on the system provided by Winston and Sandor (1984a). The system for recoding the statements included a list of each statement number and how to recode the statement. For example, items 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, and 13 followed the same recoding pattern. After recoding, items were calculated based on the total scale Developmental-Prescriptive Advising (DPA). The items were then calculated based on their respective sub-scale. The sub-scales are Personalized Education (PE), Academic Decision-Making (ADM), and Selecting Courses (SC). The sub-scale scores aligned with the DPA scale by defining the form of advising used when PE, ADM, and SC forms of advising occurred.

Part II of the AAI is to determine the type of activities that take place during an advising session and the length of time taken for each activity. Activities include personal development and interpersonal relationships, exploring institutional policies, registration and class scheduling, teaching personal skills, and academic majors and courses. The activities listed aided in the open-response section by giving students things to consider about their advising sessions. For example, when asked how frequently they spent time discussing personal concerns or problems, the student could remember a specific time when their advisor went above and beyond to help with a situation. I only

collected data from students for Part II. I chose to omit Part II from the advisor survey because the questions were geared toward students and did not pertain to advisors.

Part III of the AAI is to determine student satisfaction with advising. Students responded to prompts based on a scale that included: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Low mean scores (1-2.99) indicate dissatisfaction with the overall advising received, high mean scores (3.0-4) suggest satisfaction with advising. The prompts were:

- I am satisfied in general with the academic advising I have received.
- I have received accurate information about courses, programs, and requirements through academic advising.
- Sufficient prior notice has been provided about deadlines related to institutional policies and procedures.
- Advising has been available when I needed it.
- Sufficient time has been available during advising sessions.

The results from Part III indicate that hybrid students are satisfied with both prescriptive and developmental advising. However, their satisfaction rating is higher for developmental advising characteristics than prescriptive. Online students indicate dissatisfaction with prescriptive advising and satisfaction with developmental advising. The results from Part III are detailed in Table 9.

Table 9

Part III Student Satisfaction

	Prescriptive		Developmental	
Satisfaction Statement	Online	Hybrid	Online	Hybrid
I am satisfied in general with the academic advising I have received.	2.64	3.21	3.04	3.46
I have received accurate information about courses, programs, and requirements through academic advising.	2.50	3.36	3.09	3.48
Sufficient prior notice has been provided about deadlines related to institutional policies and procedures.	2.57	3.34	3.01	3.46
Advising has been available when I needed it.	2.93	3.39	3.24	3.50
Sufficient time has been available during advising sessions.	2.57	3.27	3.20	3.49

Note. Low mean scores (1-2.99) indicate dissatisfaction with the overall advising received, high mean scores (3.0-4) suggest satisfaction with advising.

I answered the research questions by comparing the responses received from Part I with the information from Part III in Table 9. The responses from Part I determined the advising style each student received, developmental or prescriptive. The comparison included looking at the table to see how the mean scores aligned with the satisfaction scale compared to the characteristic of developmental or prescriptive. Based on the advising style received (at the top of Table 9), I was able to determine student satisfaction to see if students who received developmental advising express higher satisfaction rates

with advising. I determined that both online and hybrid students who received developmental advising have the highest satisfaction scores.

Trustworthiness

Winston and Sandor (2002) included reliability and validity information in *Evaluating Academic Advising: Manual for the Academic Advising Inventory.* I used the manual and followed the guidelines set by the NACADA for administering the AAI.

The qualitative section included direct quotes from the participants. I did not revise or re-word any of the comments. Students from various degree programs submitted comments, so the information could be transferable because it didn't come from one particular degree. However, due to each program having a different advisor, the comments cannot be applied to other programs, only to the specific one for the student who made the comments.

Due to the low number of comments, I did not code each comment for review. I was able to read through the comments once to have an idea of the content. During the second read-through, I marked like comments. I took the like comments and read-through them to determine any common patterns to group them within the larger group. Finally, I had sets of like comments to document.

Threats to Validity

There are several potential threats to validity for this study. The threats include: understanding the question or statement, lack of knowledge, uneasy about the fact of anonymity, events that happened just before completing the survey, biases toward their advisor, and factors outside of the institution such as family or work (Fink, 2013; Fowler,

2014). I did not conduct member checks for the qualitative portion of the study because the participants wrote the information and the responses were anonymous, so I did not have a way to confirm the accuracy of the statements.

The first potential threat of the overall survey is understanding the question that is asked. There is a chance that advisors or students misinterpreted or misread one or more of the questions. The next threat is lack of knowledge or remembrance of past advising sessions. If students had not met with their advisor recently, there is a chance the interaction was not memorable. As for advisors, they may have so many advisees, remembering each one is not possible. It is possible that advisors only recalled recent meetings and used those as the basis for their responses.

Due to the small school and the fact that advisors sent the invitation to students, there is a chance that students were uneasy about their responses being fully confidential. Even though I stated that the responses were confidential and anonymous, it is possible that some students did not trust that statement and were hesitant to give honest feedback on the open response questions. Based on the number of positive responses, some students may have been uneasy about making negative comments.

Another potential threat includes recent events that could affect responses. If a student recently had an issue with their advisor or another campus department, their responses could be affected negatively. It is also possible that students who recently had a substantial positive experience which overshadowed a bad experience could respond with overly positive comments. Another threat is recent events which could cause bias or negative opinion toward their advisor. Due to many graduate students living in the local

area, it is possible that some students go to church, participate in activities, or generally know their advisor outside of the institution. If a student knows their advisor in a capacity outside of their student/advisor relationship, it is possible that students could have an overly strong positive (or negative) opinion of their advisor.

The final threat is factors outside of the institution. Because graduate-level students have lives outside of graduate school, it is possible that something could have happened which affected their responses. For example, those who are employed full-time and have a family may not have completed the survey due to time constraints. Conversely, students who are single, do not work, and live on campus would have more time to participate and take time responding. These factors outside of graduate school are only some that must be considered due to the various demographics of the students enrolled. It is not possible to know and understand all potential threats.

Ethical Procedures

I followed proper ethical procedures as learned during training. Before the collection of data, I received authorization from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (Approval # 11-15-17-0431356). I also obtained permission from the study institution's Institutional Review Board. I notified the NACADA of my intent to use the AAI and received feedback of approval. Participants received confidentiality information, and information about anonymity. Respondents also had the option to stop the survey at any time because participation was optional and none of the questions required a response.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided detailed information about the overall methodology of the project. I described the rural location of the study institution along with the rationale for researching at the location. I also detailed the explanatory-sequential design along with the justification for selecting the design. The key notable items from Chapter 3 are the procedures for data collection and the data analysis. I collected data from advisors and students, so I detailed the difference in each data set.

In addition, I described how the data were analyzed to find the answers to my research questions. It is important to see how Part I and Part III combined showed that both online and hybrid students prefer developmental advising. I included a discussion of participant selection and data collection processes. Chapter 3 concluded with potential threats to validity and trustworthiness. I outlined the possible validity issues and how each one could impact the study. In Chapter 4, I will provide data collection and analysis procedures followed by the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

My purpose in this study was to determine the advising style preference of graduate-level students and their advisors. The importance of advising on student success, noted by several researchers, prompted the research questions for this study (Crookston, 1972; Curry, 2013; Drake, 2011; Twale, 2015; Winston & Sandor, 1984b; Young-Jones et al., 2011). Graduate student success is significant because of several factors. One factor is that state funding is becoming more dependent upon completion rates than ever before. Because student success relies heavily on advisor interaction, I wanted to determine the advising style preference of graduate level students at the study institution to ensure their needs are met. Also, the graduate dean plans to use the results of this study to work with advisors to enhance student success and completion rates. In this mixed-methods explanatory study, I sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the preferred advising style of graduate students in online programs?

RQ2: What is the preferred advising style of graduate advisors who direct online programs?

RQ3: What is the preferred advising style of students in hybrid programs?

RQ4: What is the preferred advising style of graduate advisors who direct hybrid programs?

Setting

Data collection began the week before finals during the Fall 2017 semester and ended in March 2018. Students enrolled in graduate school at a public, four-year state university in rural Southwest Arkansas had the opportunity to participate. The population of 1104 graduate level students and their 15 advisors were invited to participate. Survey participants included majors from four colleges; business, education, liberal & performing arts, and science & engineering. The majority of students responding to the survey were age 20-30 (67%). I show the age breakdown in Table 10.

Table 10

Student Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-25	90	40.4	40.5	40.5
26-30	59	26.5	26.6	67.1
31-35	21	9.4	9.5	76.6
36-40	17	7.6	7.7	84.2
41-45	12	5.4	5.4	89.6
46-50	9	4.0	4.1	93.7
51-60	12	5.4	5.4	99.1
>60	2	.9	.9	100.0
Total	222	99.6	100.0	
Missing	1	4	100.0	
Total	223	100.0		

Note. Adapted from C. Pacheco, personal communication July 12, 2018.

The age of respondents aligns with the overall age demographic of graduate students enrolled. According to the university's institutional researcher, 75% of enrolled graduate students are between the ages of 20-30.

The majority of student respondents were white/Caucasian, followed by other and Asian American or Pacific Islander. All cultural background responses are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11

Student Cultural Background

Cultural Background	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
African American/Black	24	10.8	10.8	10.8
Hispanic American/Latino(a)	2	.9	.9	11.7
Asian American or Pacific Islander	30	13.5	13.5	25.1
White/Caucasian	99	44.4	44.4	69.5
Biracial/Multiracial	2	.9	.9	70.4
Other	38	17.0	17.0	87.4
Prefer not to answer	28	12.6	12.6	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Note. Adapted from C. Pacheco, personal communication July 12, 2018.

The cultural background of respondents does not align with enrollment. The majority of students enrolled are non-resident aliens (51%), followed by white/Caucasian (32%). The difference could be because international students are considered non-resident aliens at the university and I did not have that option. The international students could have selected Asian American or Pacific Islander or Other on the survey.

Student respondents were mainly female (56.6%), followed by male (33.3%). Table 12 shows the gender breakdown.

Table 12

Student Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	124	55.6	56.6	56.6
Male	73	32.7	33.3	90.0
Gender Variant/Non-Conforming	1	.4	.5	90.4
Prefer not to answer	21	9.4	9.6	100.0
Raw Total	219	98.2	100.0	
Missing	4	1.8		
Total	223	100.0		

As noted in Table 12, 55.6% of respondents are female and 33% are male. The number of female respondents is not proportionate to the number of female students enrolled. Forty-seven percent of graduate level students enrolled are female and 53% are male. The advisors who told me they e-mailed students personal e-mail addresses and/or sent students a text were in the education department. Enrollment in education programs consists of mainly female students which could be why the female response rate is greater than the male response rate. The computer science program is the largest male populated program. The advisor sent the e-mail invitation to student's school email address, which I had already done. There is a chance the e-mails were not seen by students, so they did not participate.

Responses were received from students in each degree program offered. The number of responses from each program were equivalent to the number of students enrolled. For example, the greatest number of surveys were received from students enrolled in the Master of Science in Computer and Information Science program

followed by the Master of Business Administration program. These numbers align with the enrollment figures because these are the largest two programs offered with 51% and 8% of the total graduate enrollment. Student majors from all respondents are shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Student Major

Major	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Master of Arts in Teaching	16	7.2	7.2	7.2
Master of Business Administration	27	12.1	12.1	19.3
College Counseling & Student Affairs	9	4.0	4.0	23.3
Educational Administration & Supervision	5	2.2	2.2	25.6
Elementary or Secondary Education	1	.4	.4	26.0
Gifted and Talented Education	1	.4	.4	26.5
Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education	4	1.8	1.8	28.3
Library Media & Information Specialist	11	4.9	4.9	33.2
School Counseling	16	7.2	7.2	40.4
Special Education	2	.9	.9	41.3
Agriculture	4	1.8	1.8	43.0
Computer & Information Science	90	40.4	40.4	83.4
Mental Health & Clinical Counseling	23	10.3	10.3	93.7
Kinesiology	6	2.7	2.7	96.4
Public Administration	8	3.6	3.6	100.0
Total	223	100.0	100.0	

Data Collection

Before the collection of data, I received authorization from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (Approval # 11-15-17-0431356). Permission was also obtained from the study institution's Institutional Review Board. I notified the NACADA of my intent to use the AAI and received feedback of approval.

Data collection took place more than three months. The first e-mail invitation to participate was sent to all currently enrolled graduate students and their advisors on November 28, 2017. The advisors who participated, except one, responded the same day as I sent the e-mail invitation. I think the quick response from advisors was because I have a good working relationship with the advisors and many of them ask on a regular basis about the status of my dissertation.

After the spring semester began, I did not have the number of student responses that I had hoped to receive. The graduate dean sent an e-mail asking students to complete the survey on February 28, 2018. Her e-mail boosted responses because students are familiar with her. Fink (2013) expressed the importance of respondents knowing the researcher. In this case, the dean was not the researcher, but her endorsement of the survey encouraged participation. Several of the advisors contacted me expressing their desire to help with student responses. I sent the advisors the student link, and they sent a follow-up e-mail to the students. Their help did increase the student response rate.

The e-mails from the dean and advisors resulted in a 21.2% response rate. According to Lodico et al. (2010) response rates are generally low in survey research. Other researchers noted that there is not a standard response rate (Fink, 2013; Fowler,

2014). I had initially hoped for a higher response rate, but given the researcher's information and the fact that I followed all tips I could find on increasing return rates, I was satisfied with the response rate that I received. I received a complete survey from nine of the 15 advisors for a 60% response rate. The high rate from advisors was satisfactory.

The population of graduate students and their advisors at the study institution were the subject for this portion of the research. After completing the consent form, respondents received both the survey (quantitative portion) and the open response questions (qualitative portion). The number of responses received for the student survey was 252 and nine for the advisor survey. The data were collected and initially recorded on the SurveyMonkey server. Using an online service allowed for quick data collection and helped maintain confidentiality. SurveyMonkey provided results in a format I could download to analyze and find trends for preparing the results of the study. After the survey closed, I downloaded the data onto my personal computer into Excel. From there, I sorted and analyzed the data.

Data collection took place as planned other than the length of time it took to receive the desired number of surveys. The extended time was due to the Christmas holiday and semester break. I had anticipated receiving a good amount of responses within a few weeks, but it took a few months. Dillman et al. (2014) mentioned the importance of continual reminders and noted the importance of changing the e-mail message each time and removing those who had previously responded. Because my surveys were anonymous, I chose not to send multiple e-mails myself because I could not

exclude those who had already participated. I was relieved when advisors offered to send the link to their advisees. I had not planned on asking advisors sending the survey because they are all so busy. Their offer to send the link was a welcome blessing because, without their support, I would not have been able to achieve the sufficient number of responses given the amount I received after the dean and advisor e-mails.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began after I downloaded the data from SurveyMonkey. The first step was to determine student respondent demographics for comparison with the overall graduate student enrollment. I used SPSS to calculate the number of students in each major, males and females, race, and age of the respondents. It is significant to know who responded to the survey compared to the overall population (Fink, 2013). I chose to calculate this information before sorting the data by online and hybrid students to have an overall view of who responded to the survey.

The second step was to sort the student responses by program to determine which responses belong to online students and which belonged to hybrid students. Student responses which indicated non-degree seeking were removed because the study is for students enrolled in a degree-seeking program. I placed responses from students in online programs into an Excel spreadsheet, and responses from students in hybrid programs were put into a separate spreadsheet. Advisors were not asked to specify their program due to having only one advisor per program, except for the Master of Science in Computer and Information Science. If I had asked advisors to identify their program, the responses would not be truly anonymous.

After separating the data and deleting the non-degree student responses, I began to follow the instructions in the AAI Manual (Winston & Sandor 1984a). The student data were analyzed first, followed by advisor data. I chose to examine the student responses first because it was the largest group of data. I used SPSS to analyze the data for both advisors and students because I am familiar with SPSS and it could provide the information I wanted in a table-ready format.

According to the AAI Manual, Part I has developmental and prescriptive characteristics placed randomly on the right and left sides of the survey to ensure there is not a risk of a response set. The first step was to recode the items based on the provided system to determine if student responses were developmental or prescriptive. The system for recoding the statements included a list of each statement number and how to recode the statement. For example, items 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, and 13 followed the same recoding pattern (Winston & Sandor 1984a). Next, items were calculated based on the total scale DPA to determine if students were advised developmentally or prescriptively. The items were then calculated based on their respective sub-scale. The sub-scales are Personalized Education (PE), Academic Decision-Making (ADM), and Selecting Courses (SC). The sub-scale scores aligned with the DPA scale by defining the form of advising that was used when PE, ADM, and SC forms of advising occurred. Winston and Sandor (1984a) provided the subscales and a list of items that were assigned to each subscale.

Part II of the AAI is to determine the type of activities that take place during an advising session and the length of time that is taken for each activity. I only collected data from students for Part II. I chose to omit Part II from the advisor survey because the

questions were geared toward students and did not pertain to advisors. Activities include personal development and interpersonal relationships, exploring institutional policies, registration and class scheduling, teaching personal skills, and academic majors and courses. Table 14 shows student response means and standard deviations for the five activity scales.

Table 14

Mean and Standard Deviation for Activity Scales

Activity Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation
Personal Development and Interpersonal Relationships	1.9630	1.06478
Exploring Institutional Policies	1.5462	.77523
Registration and Class Scheduling	2.5127	1.02708
Teaching Personal Skills	1.9325	1.02004
Academic Major and Courses	2.0352	.93625

Note. Part II Student Data ($N = 223$)

Students indicated that the majority of time was spent on class scheduling and registration. The least amount of time was spent exploring institutional policies.

Responses to Part II of the survey provided detailed information about what takes place during an advising session. The activities that were listed helped in the open-response section by giving students things to consider about their advising sessions. For example, when students are asked how frequently they spent time discussing personal concerns or problems, the student could remember a specific time when their advisor went above and beyond to help with a situation.

Part III of the AAI is to determine student satisfaction with advising. Students responded to prompts based on a scale that included: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and

strongly disagree. Low mean scores (1-2.99) indicate dissatisfaction with the overall advising received, high mean scores (3.0 -4) suggest satisfaction with advising.

Results

The research questions were all sufficiently answered when the results for the student satisfaction scale were tabulated. The majority of respondents from each group reported receiving developmental advising as noted in Figure 1. It is also important to note that advisors indicate they provide developmental advising to their students.

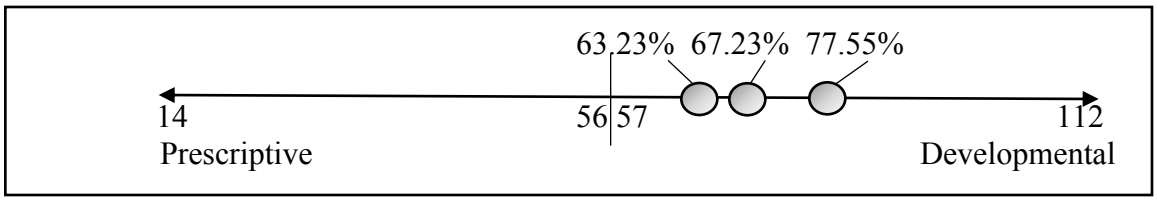

Figure 1. All respondent groups on the advising scale. Online group = 63.23%, hybrid group = 67.23%, and advisor group = 77.55%.

The research questions were answered by comparing the responses from Part I with the responses from Part III. The results were similar to the findings of several other researchers (Anderson et al., 2014; Hale et al., 2009, Young-Jones et al., 2011). The results of one study directly aligned with my findings which were that students have higher satisfaction with developmental advisors (Hale et al., 2009). Students enrolled in hybrid programs indicated greater satisfaction with the advising they received than students enrolled in online programs. Overall students who received developmental advising reported higher satisfaction rates than those who received prescriptive advising. Table 15 shows the student responses to the satisfaction portion of the inventory.

Table 15

Student Satisfaction with Advising

	Prescriptive		Developmental	
Satisfaction Statement	Online	Hybrid	Online	Hybrid
I am satisfied in general with the academic advising I have received.	2.64	3.21	3.04	3.46
I have received accurate information about courses, programs, and requirements through academic advising.	2.50	3.36	3.09	3.48
Sufficient prior notice has been provided about deadlines related to institutional policies and procedures.	2.57	3.34	3.01	3.46
Advising has been available when I needed it.	2.93	3.39	3.24	3.50
Sufficient time has been available during advising sessions.	2.57	3.27	3.20	3.49

Note. Low mean scores (1-2.99) indicate dissatisfaction with the overall advising received, high mean scores (3.0-4) suggest satisfaction with advising.

I answered the research questions by comparing the responses from Part I to the information from Part III in Table 15. The responses from Part I determined the advising style each student received. The comparison included looking at the table to see how the mean scores aligned with the satisfaction scale compared to the characteristic of developmental or prescriptive. Based on the advising style received (at the top of Table 15), I was able to determine student satisfaction to see if students who received developmental advising express higher satisfaction rates with advising. I concluded that both online and hybrid students who received developmental advising have the highest satisfaction scores.

The replies to the open response questions at the end of each section were analyzed to find common themes. I used the book *Qualitative Data: An introduction to coding and analysis* as a guide for analyzing the qualitative data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Due to the low number of comments, I was able to read through the comments once to have an idea of the content. During the second read-through, I marked like comments. I took the like comments and read-through them to determine any common patterns to group them within the larger group. Finally, I had sets of theoretical constructs. Because there was a low number of comments, I noticed that online and hybrid students had the same responses to each question. I chose to combine all student responses rather than separating them into online and hybrid.

The student responses were mostly positive. There were a couple of negative comments on the first question, but based on the nature of the comment, they appeared isolated to a few frustrated students. For example, "My advisor did set up my schedule. She was also my professor during my internship. I emailed her more than once about the assignment with no reply" could mean the advisor didn't see the e-mail. Another example of a negative comment:

> All that my advisor has done and he even didn't do this once, was to reply to my email saying I need to make a schedule and basically be like here's the two classes I'm putting you in, is that ok but not present any other choices anyway. I would've loved for my advisor to act like I was a person rather than a number.

This student is in one of the programs which have a set degree plan and does not allow for flexibility of courses. The advisor still should treat students like people rather than a

number. The advisor could communicate with the student about the degree plan to provide an understanding of the course rotation and schedule.

A common theme that emerged from the first question: "Is there anything your advisor has done/not done that you would like to mention?" was advisors communicate with their advisees to a level that students appreciate. Some examples: "My advisor is particularly good at returning communication from me," "Offers genuine advice and alternatives," "She was very helpful in getting me started in this program…," and "My advisor is very friendly and replies back as early as possible." Words that were used multiple times in comments include good advisor communication and advice, helpful, and friendly.

The common theme that emerged from the second open response question: "Are there any general comments you would like to share about your advisor/advising at SAU?" was that advisors are helpful to students and provide quality advising sessions. Some examples: "I am just getting to know her, but I am satisfied with the level of advising that I am getting," "I am pleased with my advising," " My advisor during my graduate days has been wonderful," "Above and beyond, I could not ask for a better advisor," and "My advisor was very helpful and encouraging." Multiple students used the words satisfied, pleased, helpful, encouraging, wonderful, caring, goes above and beyond, and awesome.

The third question: "Is there a specific way your advisor communicates with you that you like/dislike?" resulted in only a few responses. From the responses received, the majority of the students prefer e-mail communication (n = 30). Examples include: "I

like that I can get a quick email response to my questions" and "email I like that." Some students like both e-mail and text (n = 5). "Like email and text" and "I like that I can email or text him when needed." The least common response was phone communication (n = 2). One response included all forms of communication "Email, phone, social media – like all!" There was only one response which included social media. Based on the responses, the default communication with students should be by e-mail.

The final question was "Are there any comments you would like to make about the relationship you have with your advisor?" The common theme that emerged from the responses was advisors are nice and helpful. Comments included: "My advisor is wonderful" and "Open door policy is awesome." Students used the words awesome, wonderful, nice, and helpful over and over indicating they are satisfied with their advisors.

Overall the student responses were positive, except for the noted negative comments. To each open-response question (except number three, communication preference), several students mentioned their advisor going above and beyond for them. Examples include question one: "She has gone above and beyond what has been expected." A response to question two: "Above and beyond, I couldn't have asked for a better advisor." And a response to question four: "My advisor always goes above and beyond when I need guidance and support." The themes align with the findings of Phases I and II of the AAI. Students receive developmental advising, and they are satisfied with the advising they receive.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Winston and Sandor (2002) included reliability and validity information in *Evaluating Academic Advising: Manual for the Academic Advising Inventory.* I used the manual and followed the guidelines set by the NACADA for administering the AAI. Winston and Sandor (2002) provided the reliability and validity for the inventory. The Cronbach alpha procedure was used to estimate the reliability and internal consistency of the DPA and the three subscales.

The DPA and its subscales were found to be "relatively homogeneous and stable enough measures for use with groups of students" (Winston & Sandor, 2002, p. 15). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the DPA was .78, and the coefficients for the three subscales ranged from .42 to .81 for the SC and PE, respectively. A Cronbach alpha score of 0.700 and above is considered acceptable.

I also calculated Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the current study. The results for the advisor and student surveys were similar to those of the original study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the DPA was .703 and .678 for advisors and students respectively. These numbers are similar to the original study and are considered acceptable.

The coefficients for the three subscales ranged from .129 to .478 for ADM and PE, respectively on the advisor scale and from .280 to .720 for SC and PE, respectively on the student scale. The internal consistency for the three subscales is considered poor to unacceptable. The results do not affect my study because the subscales were not

necessary to answer the research questions. I used the entire AAI, and the subscales to determine what activities took place during advising sessions.

Summary

Chapter 4 covered the research questions and findings from the study. The setting for the research study along with detailed information about the participants was also included. Data collection took place more than a few months, and I received a 21.2% response rate from students and a 60% response rate from advisors. The overall response from students indicates they receive developmental advising from their advisor. Advisor responses indicate they advise developmentally. Student satisfaction rates indicate they are satisfied with the advising they receive. The results of the data analysis show the preferred form of advising for students in online and hybrid programs and their advisors is developmental advising. The qualitative themes that emerged confirm student's satisfaction with the developmental advising they receive. Chapter 5 will detail the key findings and the implications of these findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to determine the advising style perceptions and preference of both graduate-level students and their advisors. The study is important because it addresses two under-researched areas of higher education, advising, and graduate students (Curry, 2013). The results of this study will be used to assist the graduate dean in training graduate-level advisors. I administered the AAI through SurveyMonkey with a link sent via e-mail for completion. The design for this study was a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design with a quantitative focus. In this explanatory sequential study, I collected data in the form of a survey and provided feedback options at the end of each section for the respondents to provide clarification into their answer choice.

Results of the study indicate that both students and advisors prefer developmental advising. The average scores for all respondents fell within the developmental side of the advising scale. Part I of the AAI allowed me to determine the form of advising students receive. Part III provided the student's satisfaction level with the advising they receive. Student satisfaction rates for those who received developmental advising were higher than those who received prescriptive advising.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings confirm the results of some studies within the literature review. Researchers have found that students had higher satisfaction with developmental advisors (Hale et al., 2009; Stebleton, 2011). Students who received developmental advising were satisfied. Overall, hybrid students reported the greatest satisfaction level. Another study

indicated that advisors should meet the needs of the individual student by utilizing both prescriptive and developmental advising rather than using one form of advising for all students (Anderson et al., 2014). Students enrolled in hybrid programs who received prescriptive advising expressed greater satisfaction than online students who received prescriptive advising.

Researchers in a similar study on advising used prescriptive and developmental advising techniques to analyze student satisfaction based on preferred advising style versus the style used by their advisor. The results indicated that students were satisfied with the academic advising they received because their advisors shared the same advising style preference as the student (Hale et al., 2009). The findings from my study align with these results.

The theoretical basis for the study was Crookston's (1972) prescriptive-developmental advising model. In Crookston's model, the student and the advisor work collaboratively with either person taking the initiative to ensure academic success for the student. Students who indicated they received developmental advising from developmental advisors had the highest satisfaction rate. Overall, the findings suggest that students are satisfied with the developmental advising they receive.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study is that I conducted the study at a single institution, so the results are not generalizable to all institutions. Other institutions of similar size and demographics could use the data as a guide. They could see the results of student's satisfaction with developmental advising and implement those techniques on

their campus. Another option is to replicate this study at other institutions to determine the advising style preference of advisors and students for the specific institution. The results for other institutions could provide information on how to better serve their students. Another limitation is that the results will include information from students advised by all graduate level faculty members. Each advisor provides a different level of service, so the overall results provide a general idea and may not reflect all advisors. For example, based on the comments received, some advisors were noted as being available through a variety of communication channels and responded instantly to students. Other advisors mainly used e-mail and responded within 24 hours. Each advisor and student relationship is different and must be considered when reviewing the results.

Recommendations

While conducting the literature review, I found mainly research on academic advising at the undergraduate level. Research related to academic advising is not common, particularly at the graduate level. My project was unique because I addressed two under-researched areas of higher education, advising, and graduate students (Curry, 2013). The findings of this study can be expanded upon in a variety of ways.

The first way to expand is to determine graduate student advising preference of a larger number of students from a variety of schools. My study only provided a glimpse into the broad population of graduate level students. Further research could determine whether there is a difference between master's and doctoral level students. I conducted this study at an institution which only offers master's degrees. Expanding into doctoral level students is a possibility for further research.

Another research option is to determine the advising style preference of students in face to face programs because this study only surveyed students in online and hybrid programs. There are many schools who still primarily offer face to face programs. It would benefit those schools to determine whether their students prefer developmental advising. Students who purposely choose to enroll in face to face programs could have a different advising style preference considering their choice of program delivery mode.

Finally, one last option for further research is whether students at larger institutions prefer developmental advising or prescriptive advising. Due to the small population of the area and the study institution, students and advisors both prefer the developmental advising style. Students and advisors in larger institutions may prefer a different form of advising due to their demographic area. Just like small towns vary from densely populated areas, it is possible that students and advisors in large schools have a different advising style preference.

In addition, with state funding becoming more dependent upon completion rates, determining the importance of quality advisor contact and the success rates of graduate level students is another way to enhance the findings of this study. The results of research conducted on students at the undergraduate level have demonstrated the importance of quality advisor contact on student success (Young-Jones et al., 2011). It would be beneficial for institutions to determine whether the same holds true at the graduate level so retention and success rates could be improved.

Implications

The results of this study contain multiple implications for academic advising at the graduate level. The graduate dean can use the results to prepare a training manual for graduate level advisors. Because the results indicate that most students receive and are satisfied with developmental advising, she should focus on developmental advising characteristics. Developmental advising includes discussion of the student's strengths, weaknesses, and campus services. Also, the advisor and student effectively communicate and share the responsibility of ensuring the student's success (Crookston, 1972). Developmental advisors help the students take charge of their academic career.

Every interaction that an advisor has with a student is important because advisors know of campus services and procedures (Jaeger et al., 2011). Whether the advisor is playing the role of mentor by aiding the student in decision making and personal goals or an academic advisor and only discussing coursework, research has shown advisors have an impact on retention (Drake, 2011; Young-Jones et al., 2011). The literature indicates that advisor interaction is fundamental to the success of some students and advisors help students gain confidence, progress academically, develop confidence and engage in their own learning (Schwartz & Holloway, 2014). When advisors are aware of what students want and need from their advisor, such as help with campus services, answer general questions quickly, and help plan for the future, they can ensure student satisfaction.

Students in online programs often are not aware of campus services. I have personally spoken to students who did not know our writing center and student support center had online consultation options. Advising plays a critical role in student success

on all campuses because advisors know about campus services and procedures (Jaeger et al., 2011). All faculty members (which include advisors) are required to attend back to school meetings each August. During the meetings, they receive information about campus services, changes, and improvements on campus that effect student learning. If advisors convey the information about the appropriate services needed for each student, success rates could increase. Increased success rates benefit the institution, but more importantly, they benefit the student.

One of the recommendations for applying the results of this study is for advisors to analyze their current advising practice and learn more about developmental advising so they can utilize those traits when working with graduate level students. Also, by looking at the activity scales and satisfaction rankings, advisors can tell what was covered during advising sessions and the level of student satisfaction. These results provide information to advisors that could help them build quality relationships with students, which would, in turn, engender student satisfaction and consequently, success.

Conclusion

Section 5 covered the interpretation of the findings including that students prefer developmental advising. I also discussed the limitations of the study, with the main limitation being the generalizability of the results. Because I conducted the study at a small institution in rural Arkansas, the results are not applicable to all universities. In addition, I discussed recommendations for future research. The recommendations included expanding the study by including doctoral level students and students in face to face programs. Students in face to face programs may prefer a different form of advising

considering their program delivery preference. Finally, I covered the implications of the study which include assisting the graduate dean in developing an advisor manual to help advisors understand the wants and needs of graduate level students.

If advisors appreciate the results of this study, work to understand the components of developmental advising, and utilize those characteristics during advising sessions, students will positively benefit. Students will have a positive, satisfactory relationship with their advisor. When advisors receive satisfactory reviews from students, enrollment will grow, and graduation rates increase. Increased enrollment and graduation rates will benefit students, the institution, and society when prepared students enter the workforce. Because programs are online, it is not only the local area who will benefit from students who have earned a master's degree, but also throughout the United States.

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